UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
3 1761 01302132 4

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/chippendalehissc00blakuoft

12 S88

LITTLE BOOKS ABOUT

# OLD FURNITURE

## III. CHIPPENDALE AND HIS SCHOOL

MAHOGANY BEDSTEAD
(EIGHTEENTH CENTURY).

LITTLE BOOKS ABOUT OLD FURNITURE
ENGLISH FURNITURE VOLUME III

# CHIPPENDALE
## AND HIS SCHOOL

BY J. P. BLAKE

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY

NK
2542
C585

*Printed in Great Britain*

LIBRARY
OCT 31 1967
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

# INTRODUCTION

The name of Chippendale is so generally applied to mahogany furniture that it might seem, on a first inquiry, that he invented this rich and interesting wood, and also every style pertaining to it. Mahogany furniture, antique and otherwise, is so often airily described as Chippendale that the term has lost much of its personal significance and become simply generic.

The present volume deals with the period in the commencement of which mahogany was first employed in England in the manufacture of furniture—approximately in the first quarter of the eighteenth century (after the death of Queen Anne). For approaching two hundred years, therefore, it has sustained its popularity, and its position is still unchallenged. Certainly in the nineteenth century metal was very generally used in the making of bedsteads, but in these later days mahogany is again frequently employed for this purpose.

A very large quantity of genuine old mahogany furniture has survived to this day, and it is often described in general terms as Chippendale. The number of chairs alone seriously and deliberately described as Chippendale is almost innumerable.

It is needless to remark that this great man did not construct all these chairs. Chippendale was even more an influence rather than an actual producer, and the number of pieces of furniture which, with any approach to authenticity, can be ascribed to his hand could almost be counted on the fingers. The genius of Chippendale lay in the fact that he gathered ideas from many styles—the Dutch, French, Chinese, and Gothic—and gave them practical expression and commercial practicability. No doubt he was a great craftsman, a superb carver, and an accomplished cabinet-maker; but he was more than all this: he was a supreme influence, a virile spirit, an inspiration which is with us in our household surroundings to this day. It is sometimes objected that his ideas are not original; but the answer is that Chippendale was in business as a furniture-maker, and in his application of varied ideas to his work he collected his forms from every available source. He took the Dutch designs which he found to his hand and grafted on to them every style he could come upon—from France he took the riband-back chair; from China he took the whole of the forms of a complete phase of his work: for another he took the forms of Gothic architecture. Nothing came amiss to him.

In the present volume many simple pieces are

illustrated and described which, although certainly not the work of Chippendale, are none the less, for their form and being, assuredly attributable to his influence. Such pieces are neither expensive nor very difficult to acquire, and should certainly find a place in any collection, however modest. They are for the most part beautifully made from old wood in a condition as regards figuring and marking which at this day it is almost impossible to duplicate. Whenever possible it has been considered useful to add a rough and approximate price at which they might be purchasable.

For permission to reproduce various pieces I am again indebted to the authorities at the Victoria and Albert Museum. It is, however, to be greatly regretted that the National Collection of the furniture of the period under review is so inadequate both as regards the examples and their arrangement; and it is to be hoped that (before it is too late) some active means may be taken to augment it by a State grant or by the encouragement of private contributions. Also I have to thank Mr. C. J. Charles, of Brook Street, W., and Mr. Edward, of King Street, St. James's, for permission to reproduce several of their fine pieces; and to Mr. J. H. Springett, High Street, Rochester, and Mr. F. W. Phillips, of The

Manor House, Hitchin, I am indebted for photographs of various simple and genuine pieces of this period. Mr. Phillips in particular I have to thank for his courtesy in arranging at his interesting Galleries for photographic reproduction of the mahogany bedstead which forms the frontispiece of this volume.

There is no chapter in this book on "Fakes and How to Detect Them," because it is not thought that such things will be learnt in books except in the sense of obtaining general knowledge, which is what may be called a contributory protection. The best method of guarding against deception is to be thoroughly familiar with genuine examples, a familiarity which can generally be obtained by frequenting museums. There are, however, some people who have the antique sense which other people will never acquire, however great their knowledge. There are dealers in London whose knowledge of the historical detail of the furniture periods is of the vaguest, but who will infallibly tell you at a glance whether a piece of furniture is genuine or not. There are certain tests laid down in books about examining the feet of Chippendale chairs to see whether, in view of their being drawn to and fro from the table for a long period of years, they are worn away in the right direction, and there is the well-known formula

for detecting genuine worm-holes. This is all very well; but if a person is a judge he will not need to fall to these functions of detection, as he is almost invariably guided by the general impression of the piece; and if he is a novice, such tests will probably lead him astray, and he is much better instructed to buy his pieces through a respectable dealer, of whom there are a number in London and the country.

The present volume is concerned solely with the furniture which can be marshalled under the banner of Chippendale: no doubt the same or similar furniture was made by minor furniture-makers, but in a popular book it has not been thought worth while to enter into what are more or less academic questions as to where Chippendale's influence ended and where begins the impress of another hand; and therefore a free definition has been accepted for the term "Chippendale."

It has been remarked in the preface to previous volumes in this series that these little books are intended for amateur collectors who fall considerably short of being millionaires. Rich people are frequently considered fair game for those disposed to be predatory. It may be worth the while of the producer of antiques if the product of his efforts is to realise say fifty

pounds, but hardly if the result in the end is only five. Therefore the collector of simple antique furniture is far less likely to fall the prey of the exploiter than the well-to-do connoisseur whose eye is eager for the elaborate carving, and whose desires are occasionally gratified by a piece of furniture which, whilst the trunk is antique, the embellishments are modern.

J. P. Blake

Cowslip Cottage,
Mickleham, Surrey

# CHAPTERS


I. THE CAREER OF CHIPPENDALE 1

II. CHIPPENDALE'S OWN BOOK ABOUT FURNITURE 16

III. SIMPLE CHAIRS 33

IV. FINE CHAIRS 46

V. BEDSTEADS, CHESTS OF DRAWERS AND OTHER LARGE PIECES 60

VI. MIRRORS, CLOCK-CASES AND THE SMALLER FURNITURE 73

VII. SETTEES AND TABLES 83

VIII. IRISH CHIPPENDALE; CONCLUSION 97

# BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHIPPENDALE: "The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director." Original copies of the third (and fullest) edition sell from £30 to £40, but a reprint is published by Mr. Batsford, 94 High Holborn, at £3 15s, in cloth.

PERCY MACQUOID: "The Age of Mahogany."

CONSTANCE SIMON: "English Furniture Designs of the Eighteenth Century."

An excellent little book of first-hand information.

R. S. CLOUSTON: "English Furniture and Furniture Makers of the Eighteenth Century."

K. WARREN CLOUSTON: "The Chippendale Period in English Furniture."

Both these books reveal original research, and should be read by all who wish to continue their study of this subject.

J. A. HEATON: "Furniture and Decoration."

G. OWEN WHEELER: "Old-English Furniture of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries."

A large amount of information is compressed into this volume, much of which will not be found elsewhere.

F. S. ROBINSON: "English Furniture."

LITCHFIELD: "Illustrated History of Furniture." "How to Collect Old Furniture."

T. A. STRANGE: "English Furniture, Woodwork and Decoration."

HERBERT CESCINSKY: "English Furniture of the Eighteenth Century."

H. P. Benn and W. C. Baldock: "Characteristics of Old Furniture."
A useful little book, published in paper cover at *2s 6d.* The drawings with enlarged detail are most informative.

F. J. Britten: "Old Clocks and Watches and their Makers."
The standard work on these subjects.

Gotch: "The Growth of the English Home."

Boulger: "Wood."

Woolliscroft Read: "Chats on Costume."

Sir Walter Besant: "London in the Eighteenth Century."
A most admirable book; indispensable to any one who wishes to know of the social conditions of the time in which the Chippendale furniture was made.

Thackeray: "The Four Georges."

Boswell: "Life of Johnson."

Thorold Rogers: "Six Centuries of Work and Wages."

Walpole: "Letters."

Green, Mrs. J. R.: "Irish Nationality."

Froude, J. A.: "English in Ireland."

Hogarth: "Pictures."

# CHAPTER I: THE CAREER OF CHIPPENDALE

The writer of the Life of Chippendale is in much the same position as the biographer of Shakespeare, inasmuch as each has the scantiest material with which to compose his biography. Certainly neither was as well known in his own day as he is in this. Chippendale lived in a period in which the Press and the journals interested themselves and the public in prominent personages. It has therefore been made a matter for remark, if not for surprise, that Chippendale, who was the most important furniture craftsman of his day, should have been passed over without remark. Chippendale was a member of the Society of Arts, and a glance at the membership roll at this time, which has been carefully annotated by the present secretary, Sir Henry Trueman Wood, shows the great times in which he lived.

There was the Prime Minister; the Dukes of Devonshire, Portland, and Richmond; the celebrated Lord Chesterfield; the Earl of Sandwich, who invented the well-known comestible which bears his name and to which he was driven by pressure of business; Admiral Howe; the great Admiral Anson, the First Lord of the Admiralty,

who made the famous voyage round the world; Clive of Plassy; Rodney; the brothers Adam (Robert Adam was elected in 1758, two years before Chippendale, and James Adam in 1763, three years after); William Almack, founder of Brooks's Club; John Julius Augerstein, whose collection of pictures formed the nucleus of our National Gallery; Arne, who composed "Rule, Britannia!"; Robert Arthur, proprietor of Arthur's and White's Clubs; Sir Francis Baring, founder of Baring Bros. and chairman of the East India Company; Boswell, who as a young man of twenty was elected the same year as Chippendale, viz. 1760; Sir William Chambers, the traveller and writer of a book on the East from which Chippendale, it is said, found the suggestion for his Chinese style; Cipriani, R.A., the painter; Colman, the dramatist; Sir Francis Dashwood, the founder of the "Hell Fire Club"; Drummond, the banker; Benjamin Franklin; David Garrick; Gibbon; Oliver Goldsmith; Hawke, the great admiral; William Hogarth, whose signature in the members' book is crossed out for an unknown reason; Samuel Johnson, whose only speech on his legs is said to have been delivered to the Society; Pitt; Reynolds; Samuel Richardson; Horace Walpole.

Chippendale was elected in 1760, and all the

names enumerated above were elected between 1754 and 1764, so that all these great men would have been contemporary with Chippendale, and their names are given as suggesting the period in which he lived. It is perhaps remarkable that Chippendale (whose work must have been in a great many houses) should have been passed over by the contemporary writers and paragraphists. The practice of unveiling the private lives of prominent persons, although not polished and perfected until the present time, was not unknown in the Georgian period. Even the observant Boswell, however, apparently makes no reference to such a person as Chippendale, although he must frequently have sat on his chairs, powdered his wig at his stands, and stretched his legs beneath the mahogany of his tables. It would be strange if Chippendale had not been greatly discussed in his time. A constant and fruitful topic of conversation is the commodity for which we have to pay, whether it be wine, cigars, or furniture. Chippendale's furniture (judging from the receipts which have survived) was never cheap. He had three shops in St. Martin's Lane, and when he had a fire (and let us hope that he was well insured) he was employing a large number of workmen. Chippendale was therefore producing furniture in considerable quantities (without considering

the contemporary craftsmen whose work he influenced); numbers of houses in London and in the country must have contained his work, whether simple or fine. Why is it then that we can find so few contemporary references either to himself or to his work? Probably in his time the view that a furniture designer could be an artist was somewhat of a novel one. To this day there is certainly no record of the names of the men who designed the beautiful pieces of Queen Anne furniture. There is a well-known *Punch* drawing of a rich man walking into an artist's studio, and, finding him away, rapping on the floor with his stick and shouting "Shop!" No doubt many of the newly rich amongst the city merchants whose "new nobility was scarce current" would have behaved similarly had they strode into No. 60 St. Martin's Lane and found its proprietor out. Probably Chippendale was considered an artist by a few, and a tradesman by many. If their interest were excited by the piece they purchased, it certainly did not extend to the man who made it; he was a tradesman round the corner who lived over his shop.

There were three Thomas Chippendales, all of whom were carvers or craftsmen, or both. The second of the three was the great Thomas Chippendale. The first Chippendale is said to have

been a well-known cabinet-maker at Worcester at the beginning of the eighteenth century. It is believed that father and son came to London about 1727 and started business together. In 1749 we find Thomas Chippendale was established at Conduit Street, Long Acre—his father by this time would probably have been dead. In 1753 he removed to 60 St. Martin's Lane, London, now demolished (the present No. 60 is at present the office of the Charing Cross Electric Light Company). Miss Simon, whose book on "English Furniture Designers of the Eighteenth Century" is well worth the attention of every student of this period, has inquired with great patience into the affairs and circumstances of his life; and she points out that the parish register for 1755 records an appeal he made against an overcharge on his rates.

Thomas Chippendale is believed to have been married in 1748. There was a child, Edward, born in 1750, who died in 1752 at a house in Northumberland Court, presumably where his parents then lived. Chippendale's wife Catherine was buried at St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, London, on September 7, 1772. It is believed he married again.

Miss Simon has unearthed an interesting entry in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for April 5, 1755.

It runs: "A fire broke out in the workshop of Mr. Chippendale, a cabinet-maker, near St. Martin's Lane, which consumed the same, wherein were the chests of twenty-two workmen." This shows at least that Chippendale was doing a flourishing business to employ at least twenty-two workmen. In 1766, in consequence of the death of his partner Rannie, a sale of furniture was held from March 3 to 24, at 60 St. Martin's Lane. A catalogue would be a very interesting find. Miss Simon has managed, however, to find the advertisement of the sale in the *Public Advertiser*, as follows:

"All the genuine stock in trade of Mr. Chippendale and his late partner Mr. Rannie deceased, cabinet makers, consisting of a great variety of fine cabinet work, Chairs and a parcel of fine seasoned feathers; as also all the large unwrought stock consisting of mahogany and other woods in Blank Boards and Wainscot, of which sale timely notice will be given in this and other papers. The business to be carried on for the future by Mr. Chippendale upon the premises on his own account."

Mr. Bennett, the parish clerk, has kindly looked out for me the sexton's rough book for 1779 of the Parish Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, Charing Cross, and an entry states that Thomas Chippendale was buried at that church in the

old ground on the north side on November 13, 1779, that the fee charged was £2 7*s.* 4*d.*, and that the cause of death was consumption. The fee, £2 7*s.* 4*d.*, was probably the price paid for a family vault, as the fee for a common grave according to the entries averaged about five shillings. He was most likely well-to-do at the time of his death, and I also find, on making a search of the Rating Books of the period, that in 1778 he was assessed at £66, a considerable sum in those days. The statements as to Chippendale's birth are in the last degree controversial; but there is no doubt that he died in 1779, when he was described in the records as being of St. Martin's Lane. The point of great importance is that he is stated in the sexton's book (which is fairly reliable evidence) as being aged sixty-two, which indicates that he was born in 1717.* This upsets all the statements as to the great Chippendale making furniture in the early eighteenth century: the early furniture was probably the work of his father.

If he came to London in 1727, he could only have been a boy of ten. Assuming that he was

* Mr. Owen Wheeler says that there is no record of his age, and that "we may safely assume that he was born at the close of the seventeenth or opening of the eighteenth century"; this appears to be an error.

apprenticed to his father at fourteen, the earliest date at which he would have started to make furniture on his own account would have been about 1740. His father, no doubt, deserves more credit for the founding of the Chippendale school than up to the present he has received.

Chippendale has no Boswell, and probably if he had there would have been little of interest to record. His name, however, is potent and omnipresent as a veritable household god, one to which a certain amount of incense is always being consumed, and whose name is in a very material sense perpetuated in nearly every household in the kingdom which flourishes under the shadow of the income tax. Miss Simon, in writing of his book, thus summarises his character: "Pushing, energetic, conscious of his superiority over his rivals, full of self-assurance due to a knowledge of his own powers, an excellent business man—such is a rough sketch of Chippendale as he showed himself in this, the only writing of his which now exists. Genius as he was from an artistic point of view, it is evident that in general culture and education he was not above the class to which he belonged."

Interesting as this criticism is, it is difficult to appreciate with any approach to exactitude the class to which Chippendale did belong. We know

as a fact that he was elected a member of the Society of Arts, but this, in spite of the names of his contemporaries, which have been given at length, was probably more a matter of paying a subscription than receiving a distinction. As regards Chippendale's general culture and education, this is a subject upon which, apart from his book, we have but the smallest information. As his book was doubtless the most important production of Chippendale's life, it is probably the best indication we can desire as regards his culture and education. A great deal has been made by certain writers of the cringing tone which Chippendale adopted in his book towards the public; but it must be remembered that this was a period in which all contemporary writings were strongly tinged with a similar feeling. When Chippendale's first edition was published, Dr. Johnson's magnificent letter to Lord Chesterfield (which gave its quietus to the Patron system) had yet to be published. The attitude of the author to his patron, who was his best customer, was very much that of Chippendale towards the public he addressed in his "Director." His only surviving writings, viz., this Preface and Notes to his book, are written in clear and intelligent and, on occasion, virile English. Certainly the receptivity of his mind in adopting many and varied

ideas does not suggest one wanting in culture. The general dictionary meaning of culture, "the result of training or discipline by which man's moral and intellectual nature is elevated," is obviously inadequate. If, as is frequently asserted, environment is a potent influence, the furniture of the Chippendale school must assuredly have contributed a very great deal to the culture of others, whatever his own intellectual condition may have been.

I am indebted to Mr. G. K. Menzies, the assistant secretary of the Society of Arts, for having discovered for me the interesting fact that Chippendale was proposed for membership of the Society of Arts by Sir Thomas Robinson, who was Governor of Barbados and Commissioner of Excise. Robinson was called "Long Thomas," and was well known as an amateur architect. Probably he discussed with Chippendale his pet schemes of building, and possibly the quality of the mahogany which was exported to England from the West Indies. Robinson is interesting as being the only acquaintance of Chippendale's who from the shoals of time has been unearthed, and some interesting particulars of his life are to be found in the invaluable "Dictionary of National Biography." He was Commissioner of Excise 1735–42, and Governor of Barbados 1742–47.

His appointment to the governorship of Barbados was scarcely the reward of merit. Sir Thomas had a residence in Whitehall which a certain noble lord coveted, and in order to obtain the same he secured for Robinson the post of Governor of Barbados, in those days a much less desirable place of residence than at present. The same convenient method of disposing of an inconvenient person was pursued at a later period by my Lord Steyne when he procured for Colonel Rawdon Crawley the post of Governor of Coventry Island.

Barbados, however, did not kill Sir Thomas, as he spent five years there; but the amateur architect was too strong for the colonial governor, and he made expensive changes in his government house which caused such a furore that he had to pay the bill himself, and he was recalled to England. Probably he discussed his schemes with Chippendale at 60 St. Martin's Lane. Sir Thomas was related by marriage to the Howards, and he had constructed for his brother-in-law the west wing of Howard Castle, which proved to be out of harmony with the rest. He was also instrumental with one of his schemes in spoiling Pope's garden at Twickenham. He was well known in society, and acquired a number of shares in Ranelagh Gardens, where he became director of

entertainments, and he built himself the inevitable house—this time adjoining the Gardens. He went into Parliament, where he made several long speeches, including a very long one which, according to Horace Walpole, he was supposed to have found amongst the papers of his wife's first husband. Such was the only discoverable friend or acquaintance of Chippendale.

Chippendale, apart from certain country-houses, found his customers amongst the merchants of the City of London, who had founded a new order of nobility—the merchant princes. Thorold Rogers considers that "in 1750 it is probable that the City of London had a larger commercial income than the rent of the whole House of Lords and the Episcopal Bench." When we write in these days of "simple" Chippendale furniture in contradistinction to "fine," it is not to be supposed that reference is suggested to the furniture which composed the surroundings of the really poor people. The poor people in the eighteenth century practically had no furniture.

The middle-class home in the time of Chippendale differed very little from that of to-day; in fact, most of the comfortable furniture which fills the houses of the present time had its prototypes certainly as far back as the reign of Queen Anne. The homes of the poor, however, have

left no record behind them. Thorold Rogers writes of another period, but the words are as true of this : " There are no annals of these people, of their work and their sufferings, except in the record of their wages and the cost of their living. We see the characters on the stage, and a little more, but nothing of those who enabled these great actors to play their parts, or of the work which was being done behind the scenes. History, which crowds its canvas with these great names, tells us nothing of the people. But they that take note of the pittance which the peasant or artisan earned, and of the cost at which he spent his wages on his needful food, can interpret the hardships of his lot and the poverty of his life, the barrenness of his labour, the growing hopelessness of his condition."

No doubt the numerous pieces of furniture of the Chippendale period which survive to this day were to be found in the houses of the lesser merchants and the members of the commercial classes in fairly comfortable circumstances, as well as the large class of farmers in the country. When the Early Victorian fashions came into vogue many pieces of Chippendale furniture were displaced and found their way into cottages, whence they have been rescued by more or less disinterested collectors. In

a picture by a well-known artist there is in the interior of the workman's cottage a chair of the ordinary Chippendale type amongst the cottage furniture. The artist was once criticised for having introduced such a chair into a workman's cottage; and his answer to the argument that such a chair would not be found amid such humble surroundings was merely that he had seen it there. It is, of course, well known that in the early part of the nineteenth century many houses turned out their eighteenth-century furniture and filled it with the meretricious products of the new age, to be exchanged at a later date for the original articles, probably somewhat damaged, and certainly much enhanced in price.

The household comforts of the well-to-do and the middle class during the latter half of the eighteenth century were (with the exception of the bathroom) pretty much what they are to-day. Even the Chippendale bedstead, however much may be urged against it from the point of view of hygiene, there are no two opinions as to its comfort.

No portrait of Chippendale appears to have been painted, or at least to have survived. Mr. C. H. Holmes, of the National Portrait Gallery, has been able to trace for me the following two

portraits: (1) Mr. Chippendale, by J. Proctor: Royal Academy, 1792: Number 375. (2) Mr. Chippendale: miniature by J. T. Barber: Royal Academy, 1798: Number 771.

The Gallery has no knowledge of the whereabouts of these pictures, and neither of them seems to have been engraved. It is fairly certain, however, that they are not paintings of the great Thomas Chippendale, as even the first was not exhibited until thirteen years after his death. It is very likely that they are portraits of his son, who, after his father's death, carried on the business with Haig, under the style of Chippendale and Haig.

Thus much for the elusive personality of Chippendale.

# CHAPTER II: CHIPPENDALE'S OWN BOOK ABOUT FURNITURE

CHIPPENDALE'S furniture book, of which even the reprints are expensive, is now the treasured possession of the bibliophile; it was published in three editions, in 1754, 1759, and 1762. He describes it as "The Gentleman and Cabinet Maker's Director, being a large collection of the most elegant and useful designs of Household Furniture in the most fashionable taste," and "is calculated to improve and refine the present taste and suited to the fancy and circumstances of persons in all degrees of life." He gives a list of pieces of furniture included therein which by the time the third edition was reached was very much extended. The designs are subscribed to and laid at the feet of the Earl of Northumberland, "one of the Lords of the Bedchamber to his Majesty." The bulk of the subscribers to the book are themselves cabinet-makers, as the book was partly a trade work giving "proper directions for executing the most difficult pieces, the mouldings being exhibited at large, and the dimensions of each

design specified." In addition, however, to cabinet-makers who subscribed to the "Director" there are carvers, surgeons, dukes, joiners, enamellers, painters, upholsterers, plasterers, jewellers, engravers, chemists, earls, an organ-maker, and three professors of philosophy.

The list of the articles of furniture enumerated in the third edition is given in full for the purposes of reference:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chairs | Sofas |
| Beds and Couches | China-Tables |
| Dressing-Tables | Shaving-Tables |
| Bason Stands | Tea-Kettle Stands |
| Frames for Marble Slabs | Bureau Writing-Tables and Commodes |
| Writing-Tables and Library Tables | Library Bookcases |
| Organ-Cases for Private Rooms or Churches | Desks and Bookcases |
| Dressing and Writing-Tables with Bookcases | Toilets |
| Cabinets and Clothes-Presses | China-Cases |
| China-Shelves and Book-Shelves | Candle-Stands |
| Terms for Busts | Stands for China Jars and Pedestals |
| Cisterns for Water | Lanthorns and Chandelier-Brackets and Clock-Cases |
| Firescreens | Girandoles |
| Pier-Glasses and Table Frames | Stove-Grates |
| Chimneypieces and Picture-Frames | Frets |
| Borders | Brasswork for Furniture |
| Chinese Railing | |

This is a very respectable list and, published in 1762, shows an enormous advance from the

previous century amongst the rich and well-to-do classes in the details of household comfort and decoration. As regards Chippendale, although he remarks in his title-page that his work was suited "to the fancy and circumstances of persons in all degrees of life," it is obvious that the *clientèle* he wished to cultivate was the rich and the prosperous upper and middle classes. There are, of course, in existence a great number of simple Chippendale chairs and other genuine examples of the period, but many of these no doubt owed their existence mainly to a percolation of the fashions of the rich to the poorer districts where the style of Chippendale's work was carried on in a simple fashion.

That many of the designs in Chippendale's work are displeasing and pretentious is, perhaps, in these days pretty generally admitted. Take, for example, the Dome Bed, of which he writes: "The sides of the dome and the cornice I have formed into an elliptical form, to take off the seeming weight which a bed of this kind has, when the cornice runs straight. There are four dragons going up from each corner; the curtains and vallens are all in drapery. The head-board has a small Chinese Temple with a joss, or Chinese God; on each side is a Chinese man at worship; the outside of the dome is intended to be jappan'd,

and Mosaic work drawn upon it; the other ornaments to be gilt; but this is left to the will of those who shall please to have it executed."

Such a resting-place would not suit a timid sleeper.

The extravagance of many of his designs seems to have attracted attention at the time, as even in the first edition we find him concluding his Preface thus: "Some of the profession have been diligent enough to represent them (especially those after the Gothic and Chinese Manner) as so many specious Drawings, impossible to be worked off by any Mechanic whatsoever. I will not scruple to attribute this to Malice, Ignorance, and Inability; and I am confident that I can convince all Noblemen, Gentlemen, or others, who will honour me with their Commands, that every design in the book can be improved, both as to its beauty and Enrichment in the execution of it, by

"Their most obedient Servant,

"THOMAS CHIPPENDALE.

"St. Martin's Lane,
"March 23rd, 1754."

There is no doubt that Chippendale took himself very seriously as an artist. "My pencil," he writes, "has but faintly copied out those

images that my fancy suggested. . . . Nevertheless I was not upon that account afraid to let them go abroad, for I have been told that the greatest Masters of every other art have laboured under the same difficulty." Later he refers to "my fondness for my own offspring"; and also to "work of Taste and Genius" in such a manner as to include his own within this category. Apparently, however, he was smarting under contemporary criticism. "I am not," he says, "afraid of the Fate an author usually meets with on his first appearance from a set of Criticks who are never wanting to show their wit and malice on the performance of others. I shall repay their censures with contempt. Let them," he continues, "unmolested deal out their pointless abuse and convince the world they have neither good nature to commend, judgement to correct, nor skill to execute what they find fault with."

It must be remembered that Chippendale published the first edition of his "Director" in 1754, soon after he removed to St. Martin's Lane, but he had been working in London some considerable time previously. The "Director" was, therefore, probably a great advertising project for the purpose of making known his new premises and extending his connection. It is

quite true that there are very few simple pieces of furniture illustrated in the "Director," but no doubt such were well known in London, and could have been seen completely finished in his shop. Everything is fashionable and up-to-date; even the old favourite ball-and-claw foot is excluded, probably as being out of date. Furthermore, as will be seen from the list of subscribers, the book was partly intended to provide designs for the trade, which would scarcely have welcomed stale ones. It is a subject of remark that Chippendale should have provided contemporary craftsmen with book designs, with drawings and hints for manufacture out of the production of which he could not expect to profit. For one of his most elaborate designs he gives the following naive advice: "A workman of genius will easily comprehend the design, but I would advise him, in order to prevent mistakes, to make first a model of the same at large; which will save both time and expense." As regards brasswork he advises that it should "be modelled in wax, and then cast from these models." This propagation of his ideas seems to argue that he had more than sufficient work for himself, and it also goes some way to explain the spread of his influence by which the large amount of mahogany furniture of this period has survived.

As has been remarked, there are few simple pieces of furniture in the "Director," but from this it is not to be inferred that such were not produced in his shop under his superintendence; but no doubt they are for the most part omitted from the "Director" because he desired to include only the newest types in his book, and naturally to appeal to the long purse. It is highly improbable that he produced more than a minority of the examples illustrated: if he did they have certainly not survived. Many of the compositions are extravagantly ornate in the most flamboyant Louis XV. style, and in a taste which, if it appealed to his period, would certainly not be acceptable to our own. He appears to have a feeling in his book that the decoration is sometimes overdone, as occasionally we find him writing in a manner which suggests apology, to the effect that it would at least be no worse if it were less elaborate. "A skilful workman," he writes of one example, "may also lessen the carving without any prejudice to the design"; and again he remarks: "If the carving of the chairs was thought superfluous the outlines may be preserved, and they look very well." In respect to a bookcase he says: "The Trusses, Pilasters, and Drops of Flowers are pretty ornaments; but all of them may be omitted if required"; and as regards a

clothes-press: "The ornaments may be omitted if thought superfluous."

Of course in this day the more ornate the Chippendale furniture the more expensive it is to acquire, so that it is for unswollen purses something of a satisfaction to know that Chippendale himself placed no essential importance upon excess of decoration; but it would appear he was the servant of the taste of his time as well as the master of it. The fact that his book is full of elaborate examples is apt to direct too much attention to the later period of his work, when he was a rich and fashionable craftsman. It is none the less the fact that to what may be termed his pre-"Director" period we owe an immense number of simple pieces in probably purer and better taste.

Chippendale's own opinion of his various forms of work is not disturbed by inordinate modesty. We find him referring to one of his designs as "Three Ribband-back chairs which, if I may speak without vanity, are the best I have ever seen (or perhaps have ever been made)." He also recommends red morocco for the covering of these riband-back chairs, which to any one who is fortunate enough to possess such treasures may be useful information. His notes on his Chinese chairs are interesting.

Probably he had an appreciative corner in his heart for his Chinese work, as we find him writing of a cabinet in this style: "If finished according to the drawing, and by a good workman, will, I am confident, be very genteel." In fact, the Chinese influence must have been very much on his mind at this time, as we find him writing of another piece: "a china case not only the richest and most magnificent in the whole [book] but probably in all Europe. I had a particular pleasure in retouching and finishing this design, but should have much more in the execution of it, as I am confident I can make the work more beautiful and striking than the drawing. The proportion and harmony of the several parts will be view'd with advantage and reflect mutual beauty upon each other. The ornaments will appear more natural and graceful and the whole construction will be much improved under the ingenious hand of a workman as to make it fit the most elegant apartment." Even in his French chairs the coverings bear Chinese designs, and one of his Gothic bookcases has an unmistakable Chinese look about the top of it. The Gothic and Chinese chairs have also something in common.

This "craze," as it has been called, for the Oriental was no new thing, it having commenced

(as has been noticed in the previous volume) in the Chinese porcelain and lacquered furniture which had been popular in the reigns of William and Mary and Anne and has continued in various forms to the present day. For the display of china Chippendale was remarkably happy in designing galleried tables decorated with fretwork in the Chinese fashion, a style in which he appeared to take great interest. In the first edition of his book we find him writing of some chairs as being in the "present Chinese manner, which I hope will improve that taste, or manner of work; it having yet never arrived to any perfection; doubtless it might be lost without feeling its beauty; as it admits of the greatest variety, I think it is the most useful of any other. . . . The three last [chairs] I hope will be well received, as there has been none like them yet made."

In the third edition of the "Director" he again refers to his Chinese chairs and describes them as "very proper for a lady's dressing-room: especially if it is hung with India paper. They will likewise suit Chinese temples. They have commonly cane bottoms with loose cushions; but, if required, they have stuffed seats and brass nails."

It is probably unnecessary to consider how

far Chippendale's Chinese style possesses any real Oriental feeling, because it is a matter of very small importance. Chippendale chose to call a particular style Chinese, a style which in many of its phases is exceedingly decorative and pleasing, and the situation is not really complicated by the question as to whether or not the style is genuinely reminiscent of the East. Chippendale's opportunities of absorbing Oriental ideas were no doubt confined to one or two inadequate books. It may be taken as a fact that he never went to China, and probably his furniture was all the better for it. Mr. Clouston writes in this connection: "Chippendale's ideas both on the country and its art were curiously inaccurate. In one instance he gives a plate entitled a *Chinese Cabinet*, while in his letterpress he describes it as an *Indian Cabinet*, Chinese and Indian being apparently to him synonymous terms."

Chippendale, no doubt, was in the position that he had to sell his wares and that he had to follow a fashion as well as to create one, and it was no doubt the same to him whether he called a particular fashion Chinese or Indian. Certainly no one in this country has so happily applied so many and so varied decorations to furniture; and should the ghost of the great cabinet-maker "re-

visit the glimpses of the moon" he would assuredly find that there was scarcely a home in this country but where some or other piece of furniture bore his name, although few, alas! his credentials.

As regards Chippendale's Gothic period, this was probably short-lived: few of these chairs are to be found at the present day, and even when found are more curious than beautiful. Mr. Clouston thinks it is a style "for which he had very little real feeling." Another authority, however, writes: "His efforts in Gothic were sometimes highly successful: often they took the form of the tracery of a church window or even an ovalled rose-window." There is, however, a sense of unreality and unsuitability about these Gothic chairs, a style which is, in a word, entirely out of place amongst ordinary household furniture. In the "Director" we find Chippendale writing of some Gothic chairs: "Most of the ornaments may be left out if required." It is highly probable that neither Chippendale nor any one else could reconcile the coldness of Gothic architecture with the ideals of warmth and comfort which should dominate any scheme of domestic furnishing.*

* It is fair to add that good authorities think otherwise. Miss Simon writes: "The finest examples display not only beauty and originality but are perhaps more truly national in their ornamentation than any productions of the Chippendale school."

What impresses one in the designs in Chippendale's book is their almost entire dissociation from our present examples of Chippendale furniture. It is very probable that much of his best work was done before the "Director" was published —work which is strongly reminiscent of the Queen Anne period and includes the claw-and-ball foot, which, as has been pointed out, finds no place in the "Director." It may well be that Chippendale's work, like that of other and different artists, was not improved by becoming fashionable. That he himself appeared to appreciate the extravagances into which fashion sometimes forced him is sufficiently indicated by his attitude (as indicated above) towards the ornate side of his furniture. As regards the generality of furniture which is now accepted as Chippendale, this description must be interpreted as indicating his influence, as its authenticity is clearly dependent upon tradition and the general resemblance it bears to his school. It has for the great part no place in his "Director." There are, however, illustrations of the more familiar type of his chairs about which he gives the following advice: "The seats look best when stuffed over the nails, and have a brass border neatly chased; but are most commonly done with brass nails, in one or two rows; and sometimes the nails are done to

imitate fretwork. They are usually covered with the same stuff as the window curtains. The height of the back seldom exceeds twenty-two inches from the seat."

I have reproduced from the "Director" the following examples, which are some of the simplest of the designs, selecting those which approach to what we at the present time understand as "Chippendale." Fig. 1 shows six chair backs which are pure and typical Chippendale and indicate the marked and definite departure from the forms of the Queen Anne period. Fig. 2 illustrates the famous riband-back chairs with cabriole legs and curled feet; it is possible to acquire examples of this phase of Chippendale, but at a price which is almost beyond the reach of a museum. Fig. 3 is a reproduction of the Gothic chairs, few specimens of which survive at this day. It will be noticed in the illustration that alternative forms of decoration are offered for the skirting round the seat and also that different forms of legs are suggested, several of which are more reminiscent of the Renaissance than the Gothic spirit. Probably the task of domesticating Gothic architecture was, from the outset, a hopeless one, and not even Chippendale could on such an unsuitable foundation produce a happy effect. Fig. 4 shows another phase of Chippendale

—the Chinese. These chairs, which were produced at the time of the Oriental fashion, have, it will be noticed, again several alternative decorative ideas. On one side the legs are shown decorated and with a fretwork bracket added; on the other side they are plain. Further, on one side the chair is shown with connecting rails beneath the seat, and on the other side it is not. Lastly, one chair is shown with an arm and the other side without. No doubt the purpose of this economy of space was to reduce the expenses of production, which, with the engraving, must have been considerable; but it also rather points to the fact that the book was intended at least as much for the trade as for the public, as the latter could not be expected to be so much impressed by a design of half a chair as they would be by a whole one.

Fig. 5 illustrates a basin-stand and glass and a shaving-table, both of which suggest the enormous advances in household comfort from the previous century. The basin in the stand is still decidedly diminutive.

Fig. 6 shows various designs for basin-stands and tea-kettle stands, and the former again do not appear to offer much prospect of fulfilling any thoroughly practical purpose. None of these pieces fulfil the ideas of the purified Chippendale

style which has survived, and are probably much too ornate for our modern taste.

Fig. 7 is a reproduction of several types of Chippendale bed-posts, or bed-pillars as he calls them in his book.

Fig. 8 shows examples of the highly decorated glass mirrors upon which Chippendale apparently lavished great ingenuity of ideas and great pains in carving and workmanship. They are, of course, only suitable to hang in great houses.

Fig. 9 is a reproduction of two of Chippendale's own clock-cases, which have a rather lifeless appearance without the clock-face and hands. These are beautiful examples of Chippendale's design, showing fertility without elaboration and restraint without primness.

I have avoided the somewhat extravagant examples of design in Chippendale's book, which possibly were only shown with a view of indicating that no design in wood, however difficult or even exaggerated, was beyond his powers, and I have reproduced simpler and more characteristic designs as being more useful for comparison with the examples which have survived to this day.

It is pleasant to find that a craftsman of a later day refers to Chippendale's book of designs in appreciative if unenthusiastic terms. Sheraton in his own book, published in 1793, called the

"Director" "a real original book," and again he refers to Chippendale's designs and says: "They are now wholly antiquated and laid aside though possessed of great merit, according to the times in which they were executed." The last reference is probably the competitive commercial touch.

# CHAPTER III: SIMPLE CHAIRS

Oak furniture, it has been said on authority, is unsuitable for city dwellings, as its proper atmosphere is a farm-house with oak-beamed ceilings, white walls, and the fascinating surroundings of sixteenth-century architecture. In modern cities it is said oaken furniture is alien to the soil: it is dark and attracts the dust: it was never designed for such environment. This is a strong point of view, although it is certainly not the writer's, but there is a point in the fact that the furniture of the Chippendale period was made in many instances for the same or similar houses to those in which it reposes to-day, and is, therefore, in its own element and atmosphere.

There are a very large number of chairs of a simple sort to be found all over the country which are called Chippendale chairs, and which, if we allow a broad and catholic reading to the term, are doubtless properly so called. They are chairs made in the eighteenth century in forms which are reminiscent of, or directly or indirectly inspired by, the forms which the Chippendales originated or adopted. This is of course a very wide definition of Chippendale, but probably it is the only one which can be expected to contain

the large output of genuine eighteenth-century furniture.

Chippendale was first and foremost a chair-maker, and certainly he mixed more brains in the designing of chairs than of any other form of furniture; and as a maker of chairs he is represented by an example, ancient or modern, in nearly every household. It is interesting to note that the legs of the old chairs, both back and front, are, as a rule, not square, but have an additional small inner side, making five sides in all; this is a detail which is often not observed and followed in the modern examples. I do not know that there is any express reason for this slight deviation from the square, unless, as is frequently the case in handicraft as opposed to machine production, the worker is inclined to rebel against the obvious.

The seat coverings of the chairs were sometimes drawn over and secured to the woodwork with brass nails, as mentioned in Chippendale's own book; or the seats were separate pieces and were shaped to fit in a recess. The writer earnestly recommends, in the interests of hygiene, that any reader possessing an old chair should have it, not reupholstered, but restuffed. The writer recently unstuffed several chairs of this period, and the amount of dirt contained within

the seats was incredible. It must be remembered that such chairs were originally stuffed long before the days of Factory Acts and factory inspection, and doubtless the selection of stuffing was not made very fastidiously. Added to this, the accumulations of considerably over a century offer a further and very formidable argument for restuffing. It is frequently the case that the chairs have several times been re-covered, and the stuffing being well beneath the surface, its existence is not taken into account in the annual spring cleaning.

The claw-and-ball foot was frequently used in the walnut furniture of the Queen Anne period, and Chippendale, who was apparently always ready to absorb any good idea, adopted it for his mahogany furniture, although in all probability he also (and certainly his father) worked the idea, which is as old as the Great Wall of China, in walnut-wood. The transition of the chair from the Queen Anne style to the style of Chippendale seems to have been by way of the back, the splat of which was pierced and lightened and its character thereby entirely changed. There are few changes in English furniture more marked and more interesting to note than this change from the pleasing primness of the Queen Anne chairs to the varied convolutions

of those of the Chippendale period. That a plain back should in the course of time become pierced and intersected is no doubt in the natural course of evolution; but it is remarkable that the change should have brought about so complete an alteration in the style of furniture. The transition, however, was more gradual than at other times. The change from the plain solid oak chairs of the Cromwellian period, admirably strong, simple, unpretentious, and adequate, to the caned, becherubed, and becrowned productions of the restored Stuarts was almost revolutionary in its abruptness. The two sorts of furniture might belong to peoples separated by the poles and by centuries, so absolute is the difference. Again, the Dutch influence which came in strongly with the advent of William and Mary brought about what may be called the domesticity of English furniture. With the advent of Chippendale and his school the differences which asserted themselves were in the nature of a development rather than a revolution. Late Queen Anne and Early Chippendale are for all practical purposes synonymous terms, as even in the very early part of the eighteenth century the changing influence which in its tangible and definite shape we know as "Chippendale" began to assert itself.

Chippendale's work is divided into several fashions and phases. The first, which includes the claw-and-ball foot, shows strongly the Queen Anne influence, and nothing is more marked and more interesting to note than the break-up and disappearance of the solid splats in the chairs and settees. It requires a great deal of knowledge and an even greater amount of imagination to decide whether a piece of furniture is Late Queen Anne or Early Chippendale; the most definite and distinct difference between the walnut chairs of Queen Anne and the mahogany chairs which followed is in the splat which came out of the solid and assumed many pleasing shapes. Chippendale's father is believed to have set up business in London in 1727, and as he worked in the country before settling in London it is very likely that he first worked in walnut in the old Queen Anne style; in fact, it is quite possible that some of the fine Queen Anne furniture is the work of his hand. It was obvious, of course, that the solid Queen Anne backs offered little or no opportunity to the carver, a department of craftsmanship in which it is generally agreed that the two Chippendales were adepts. It is a fair statement that the development of the solid splat into the varieties of the eighteenth century was due in the first

place to the influence of the Chippendales. The movement began in the Queen Anne period, and some of the elder Chippendale's work may belong to this period, although it has never been identified, and as regards the great Thomas Chippendale there can be no doubt that he followed his father's traditions.

In order to keep the situation clear the following dates are material :

| | |
|---|---|
| Queen Anne died | 1714 |
| Chippendale born | 1717 |
| Chippendale comes to London with his father | 1727 |
| George I. died | 1727 |
| First edition of Chippendale's book published | 1754 |
| Second edition published | 1759 |
| George II. died | 1760 |
| George III. begins to reign | 1760 |
| Third edition of Chippendale's book published | 1762 |
| Chippendale died | 1779 |

Following the period of the claw-and-ball foot, the form of decoration took the shape of the heads and paws of lions, which appeared, carved with great spirit and animation, on the arms and legs of chairs, stools, and settees ; and later we have the satyr mask applied in the same connection. It is, of course, rather a matter of tradition than fact that these designs are the work of Chippendale, as being produced before the publication of his book they belong to the period

about which there is little authentic information, but, as in the case of pictures, good judges of furniture are able to date backwards. The animal form of decoration was succeeded by a more restrained style with simple leaf designs on the knees of the chairs; and in the middle of the eighteenth century Chippendale, who was now the proprietor of a prosperous business on his own account, published his book of designs, and in Figs. 1, 2, 3, and 4 are reproduced his own chair backs and also his riband, Gothic, and Chinese designs.

Amongst the very simplest forms of eighteenth-century chairs is that which is familiarly known as the spindle-back, because, obviously, of the number of turned spindles which go to make up its back. Such chairs were doubtless made in large numbers all over England for country use, and are useful at the present for their original purpose of furnishing a cottage. Figs. 10 and 11 are such chairs which should be purchasable, the single chairs for something under a pound and the arm-chairs for about double. If any one cares to observe in the feet a rough country survival of the claw-and-ball design he will very likely be correct in his observation. Another type of chair of this period is the ladder-back, which in its simple form (as in Fig. 12) was made largely

in Lancashire. As in the instance of the spindle-back chair, the construction is of the simplest, and there is a strong family likeness in the turning; and they have a similar value. The ladder-back style found various forms of expression from the cottage to the parlour chair, the latter being lightened by the piercing of the back rungs. Three chairs are shown in Figs. 13, 14, and 15; the first two are worth about four guineas each and the third about seven guineas. The square legs and rather heavy lines of Figs. 13 and 14 proclaim their somewhat undistinguished origin. The lines of Fig. 15, however, suggest somewhat better company. It will be noticed that the general lines are lighter than in the two preceding examples and that the arm supports are pierced. There is, in addition, a pretty convolution in the piercing of the back. This example would be a better bargain at seven guineas than the others would be at four.

Hogarth's pictures are perhaps the most vivid and interesting chronicles of the first half of the eighteenth century which we possess; some of them depict the details of the interiors of the period, which, coming from an artist of supreme fidelity, are evidence of an unexampled value. To look through a book of Hogarth plates is to realise with all the actuality of a

cinematograph the daily life with its appalling crime and poverty, which, beneath a thin veneer of pretty manners, made up the social picture of the eighteenth century.

In "The Harlot's Progress" (1735) and "Marriage à la Mode" (1745) we find reproduced the simple ladder-back chair (*see* Fig. 12), and the type is repeated in various plates. There is also a child's chair of the same type. This would certainly point to the fact that the simple ladder-back chairs were antecedent and not subsequent to the more elaborate chairs of this type, as is stated by some authorities. These chairs appear on so many occasions in Hogarth's plates that there can be no doubt that they were a common type in the first half of the eighteenth century, and Chippendale, with his usual readiness to follow any idea which appealed to him as good, would have adopted this country type of chair and added it to the ideas which he would have set aside for development.

It is remarkable that Hogarth does not (so far as the writer is aware) reproduce any typically Chippendale chair. This exemplifies the principle that old styles die hard. In many of Hogarth's plates of tavern interiors the chairs have the simple, sturdy Cromwellian appearance, and of course it is obvious that these chairs, being so soundly

put together, would easily last into the century following their construction. In the plate "Taste in High Life" (1742) there is a pole screen of simple design which certainly has a Chippendale look; but in a later plate, "Marriage à la Mode" (1745), the chairs are of a heavy sort, with tall stuffed backs and cabriole legs, more of the school which we understand as Queen Anne than that of Chippendale. Again, in the portrait of John Wilkes, who, by the way, like Chippendale, was a member of the Society of Arts, we find Wilkes seated on a chair with a pure Queen Anne slat back.

In one of the plates of "The Idle Apprentice" series (1747) there is shown in the Alderman's room a chest of drawers with the familiar brass drop handles, something in the shape of a flattened flower-bud, which we associate with the brass-work on Jacobean furniture. These plates of Hogarth's provide clear evidence that the furniture of the Queen Anne period continued in general use well into the second half of the eighteenth century, and that furniture of the school of Chippendale was by no means the usual furniture of the houses of the time, the occupiers of which were gradual converts to the new mode.

The Windsor chair is a very well-known type and is associated with cosy parlours in country inns, and evenings made jovial by tawny port, and nights passed in sweet oblivion between lavender-scented sheets. The Chippendale Windsor (Fig. 16) is, however, of rarer type, and it is made in mahogany with cabriole legs, and has a value of about five guineas. Another interesting or rather curious chair is the wheel-back (Fig. 17), which was made in many variations in this period. The corner or roundabout chair was a type of considerable popularity during the Chippendale era. Fig. 18 is a reading chair of this form, an extra support being provided for the head. This chair is valued by the owner, Mr. F. W. Phillips, The Manor House, Hitchin, at eight guineas. Another of lighter and prettier build is Fig. 19, the seat being serpentine fronted and the legs having more character. Fig. 20 again is a chair of the same family type, but of better class, having in addition to an acanthus decoration on the knee a very spirited claw-and-ball foot, and the convolutions of the back are also in good style : at ten pounds this chair would not be dear.

Fig. 21 shows a type of Chippendale chair of a simple sort with which every one is familiar. The back is in outline reminiscent of the Queen

Anne period. Sets of similar chairs are generally used in dining-rooms, and to acquire the same the price should not be very greatly in excess of merely modern chairs. The present set, which comprised two arm and seven single chairs, was purchased for thirty pounds. Fig. 22 is another simple Chippendale arm-chair, not in the familiar mahogany, but in beechwood. In Fig. 23 there is a very interesting expression of the celebrated riband-back chairs the original design for which is shown in Fig. 2. The present is, of course, but a plebeian form of an elaborate and aristocratic prototype, but the family likeness of the poor relation is unmistakable. The same principle of the reproduction in simple form of highly ornate types is shown in Fig. 24, which is probably at least as pleasing as the more elaborate forms. This is the phase of Chippendale which is known as Gothic or Cathedral Chippendale, and even in this simpler form the chair is a rare type and is worth at least ten guineas. Of course the connection between this pattern and Gothic architecture is remote. Figs. 25 and 26 belong to the Chinese period, a phase of which examples are not easy to find. The first is valued at ten guineas. The second should perhaps more properly belong to the next chapter, that dealing with fine chairs. The legs are recessed in panels

and carved with festoons of fruit and flowers, and the legs have pierced brackets: it is valued by the owner (Mr. F. W. Phillips, of Hitchin) at twenty-five guineas.

Sets of Chippendale chairs, however simple, are, of course, perfectly in their element in a dining-room. The drawing-room should, however, perhaps be set apart for those acquisitions which, because of their distinct individuality, have not demeaned themselves by appearing before the world in sets. If to acquire each of these specimens represents a period of research and a financial strain, so much the better. Single examples of chairs of the Chippendale period—for instance, the ladder-back, the wheel-back, the corner, or the Chinese—are admirable and interesting additions to the drawing-room.

# CHAPTER IV: FINE CHAIRS

A BETTER appreciation of the fine chairs of the eighteenth century will be brought home to us by an understanding of the fine people who sat on them and the times in which both had their being. In this period the divisions of society were clearly defined. There was the aristocracy, the trading class, and the poor; and the lines of demarcation were sacredly observed. The rich merchants lived in the City of London—their houses in, for example, St. Helen's Place are still to be seen—and the City of Westminster, where my Lord and Lady had their home, was another world to the tradesman. In the middle of the century, however, a few intrepid spirits crossed the border, but, advancing no farther than Bloomsbury, entrenched themselves in that position, and the beautiful houses in which they lived may now be rented at unextravagant prices. It is true that early in the century (1720) the aristocracy had on one historic occasion descended upon the City when their valour for a period got the better of their discretion; but when, the South Sea Bubble having burst, they returned to their chocolate houses they shook from their shoes the dust of the new society of merchandise.

"Three-fourths of them," writes Thorold Rogers, "would have restored the Stuarts from sheer hatred to the moneyed men."

Although as a mere measure of years we are so close to the eighteenth century, there is now little in common between our own and that society. Then a man with a pedigree would not speak to a man without; a nobleman would not speak to a merchant; a doctor and a barrister were alike outside the pale of society. What we understand as a democracy did not exist: the Government represented nobody except themselves and their friends. Private patronage accounted for half the members of the House of Commons, and the remainder were elected on a franchise into which practically no element of representative government had been introduced; and reformers were steadily sent to prison. It was a time of placemen and pocket boroughs: unless a man had a crest and a coat-of-arms and a family tree (however shady), there was no hope, whatever his ability, that he could attain to any place in the business of government. The consequence was that, there being no one at first hand who could state the case for the poor, the case for the poor was not stated. For example, Bethnal Green was, as now, a poor parish with heavy poor-rates, which had to be entirely paid by the

inhabitants: the rich people who employed them there, but who did not live in the parish, paid nothing. It was a time when the spirit of humanity burned very low: child-labour was general; little boys, for example, under conditions of incredible hardship, were employed to climb and sweep chimneys. The death-rate was at least twice that of the present time. No counsel for the defence was allowed to address the jury in any criminal case.

In such a society the contrasts were sharply defined and the blacks and the whites stood out in unmistakable relief. Thackeray, in "The Four Georges," gives some interesting extracts from the journals of 1731, from which the following are selected: "The Lord John Russell married to the Lady Diana Spencer at Marlborough House. He has a fortune of £30,000 down, and is to have £100,000 at the death of the Duchess Dowager of Marlborough, his grandmother." "Mary Lynn was burned to ashes at the stake for being concerned in the murder of her mistress." "Wheat is 26*s.* to 28*s.*, and barley 20*s.* to 22*s.* a quarter; three per cents, 92; best loaf sugar, 9½*d.*; Bohea, 12*s.* to 14*s.*; Pekoe, 18*s.*; and Hyson, 35*s.* per pound." "This being Twelfth-day, his Majesty, the Prince of Wales, and the Knights Companions of the

Garter, Thistle, and Bath appeared in the collars of their respective orders. At night their Majesties played at hazard with the nobility, for the benefit of the groom-porter; and 'twas said the King won 600 guineas, the Queen 360, Princess Amelia 20, Princess Caroline 10, the Duke of Grafton and the Earl of Portmore several thousands."

This habit of gambling extended through all classes. The poor took lottery tickets, or a share in one, and this they called "insuring in a lottery"; and amongst the rich the practice grew until (says Sir Walter Besant) "it was a common custom for a lady to admit the proprietor of a faro-table, and to allow of gaming in her own house for a fee of fifty guineas a night." To the practice we owe the incentive of an immense amount of crime, and also the charming and interesting card-tables produced by the furniture-makers of the eighteenth century, "and many a thing supremely done by Chippendale and Sheraton."

What was the life of the gallant of the time? Thackeray writes: "You get up at nine; play with Raton your dog till twelve in your dressing-gown; then creep down to White's; are five hours at the table; sleep till supper-time; and then make two wretches carry you in a sedan-

chair, with three pints of claret in you, three miles for a shilling."

There was, however, another side of the life of the time which was too small to affect the community, but too bright a spot in its history to be overlooked. It was the society of the wits, the men of letters, the artists of the time, who cared nothing for blue blood but everything for brains and good-fellowship. "Ah, I would have liked a night at the 'Turk's Head,'" writes the author of "The Four Georges," "even though bad news arrived from the colonies and Doctor Johnson was growling against the rebels; to have sat with him and Goldy; and to have heard Burke, the finest talker in the world; and to have had Garrick flashing in with a story from his theatre."

It does not appear that even to live in these good old days was to escape taxation. In the latter half of the eighteenth century to wear a wig was to incur a tax of a guinea a year for the powder; to wear a good hat cost 2*s.* a year; to possess a clock 5*s.* a year; a gold watch 10*s.* and a silver one 7*s.* 6*d.* Windows, of course, were taxed, and we notice in the old Georgian houses how the people modified the tax by bricking up the windows; a four-wheeled vehicle cost £8 a year; a man-servant cost

£1 5*s.* per annum, but if a bachelor employed him the cost was double; bricks were taxed at 5*s.* a thousand; imported paper paid 75 per cent.; newspapers 3*d.* and 4*d.*, according to size; cards 2*s.* per pack; and dice 15*s.* a pair.

As regards costume, the great periwig which necessitated the gallants carrying their hats under their arms (*see* vol. ii. page 48) went out of fashion; the feathered hats, the full-skirted coats, the huge cuffs also departed, and the allowances of lace and embroidery were largely reduced and the whole costume simplified. The wig, however, remained in fashion (fitted over a closely shaven head), and it was still a badge of social condition; only the poorer classes retained their own hair. The many different varieties of wigs are closely observed in Hogarth's pictures. About the middle of the century the use of the wig began to wane; it had been growing smaller, and at last it degenerated into a "toupee"; the wig, however, lingered on the heads of parsons, physicians, and barristers, and on the head of the advocate it remains to this day. The "blood" of the day wore a close-fitting, flowered, brocaded waistcoat; a skirted coat of satin or velvet trimmed with gold or silver lace; breeches of crimson or black velvet; stockings of black or white silk; a gold-laced

hat; ruffled shirt and neckcloth; sword, gold-headed cane, and a tortoise-shell snuff-box with a portrait of a lady on the lid. On the whole a very pretty picture. The ladies wore hoops and a great quantity of petticoats, to receive which the chairs and settees of the period are of ample capacity.

Besant gives an extract from a journal of the middle of the eighteenth century in which we see the gallant in his habit as he lived, a picture of the period which illustrates vividly the prevailing Chinese fashion: it is in an account of a "pretty fellow's" dressing-room, and it runs: "I was accordingly shewn into a neat little chamber, hung round with Indian paper and adorned with several little images of Pagods and Bramins, and vessels of Chelsea china, in which were set various coloured sprigs of artificial flowers. But the toilet most excited my admiration, where I found everything was intended to be agreeable to the Chinese taste. A looking-glass, enclosed in a whimsical frame of Chinese paling, stood upon a Japan table over which was spread a coverlid of the finest chintz."

A fine chair of Chippendale's pre-"Director" period is shown in Fig. 27. This chair, the property of Mr. Edward Duveen, is strikingly like the chair to be seen at the Soane Museum,

Lincoln's Inn Fields, London. It is stated by one authority that the original receipt signed by Chippendale was at one time at the museum. Like, however, so many Chippendale "clues," when investigated they come to very little, as the museum authorities consider it very doubtful that any receipt would have been preserved, as when the museum was presented to the nation by Sir John Soane the chair was not considered by him to be of sufficient importance to be catalogued as an exhibit, but was merely taken over as a piece of household furniture. It is now, of course, one of the most valued exhibits. This points again to the conclusion that the regard paid to fine furniture at the present time is a modern development, and that when the furniture was made and for many years afterwards its possession was regarded without enthusiasm.

In Fig. 27 we have the strong cabriole leg, the claw-and-ball foot, and human mask which belong to the early period of the Chippendale school. The human mask as applied to furniture is, of course, of immense antiquity; it was used by the Chippendale school for a short period, but by the time the "Director" was published in 1754 it had long passed out of fashion. This chair, like the one in the Soane Museum, has a

cane seat, which, although no doubt renewed from time to time, was probably the original form of covering, being a survival of the popular cane seats of the end of the seventeenth century. The strange prolonged bird-beak to the arms is interesting and unusual.

Fig. 28 is a fine chair which may be assigned to the period of the publication of the "Director" (mid-eighteenth century), as its form is reminiscent of pieces in Chippendale's book. It bears the impress of first-class workmanship. This chair is to be seen at St. Peter's Hospital, Bristol, now used as the office of the Bristol Board of Guardians. The building itself is most interesting: it was built towards the end of the twelfth century, and is said to be one of the best specimens extant of the domestic mansion of the period. Its career has been extensive and peculiar. In the fifteenth century it was occupied by Thomas Norton, the most celebrated alchemist of his time. Later it became a sugar-house (the bag-hooks are still suspended from the ceiling); a hospital for cholera patients; a mint; a lunatic asylum (with the whipping-post and all the horrors of the eighteenth-century Bedlam); a workhouse, wherein Thomas Dover was the first medical man in England to offer his services without cost to the poor. Dover was partner

in the *Duke* privateer, and was on board when she picked up Alexander Selkirk off Juan Fernandez in 1707. Defoe met Selkirk in an inn called "The Star," opposite St. Peter's Hospital, and with the instinct of the first and greatest English journalist he extracted his story, which found its supreme embodiment in "Robinson Crusoe." No doubt the author visited St. Peter's with his friend the Doctor, but as he died in 1731 it is to be doubted whether he ever sat on the Chippendale chair. The back of this example is a beautiful piece of carving, and the legs are similar to the examples in the "Director," which Chippendale calls "French." The brass nails are a decoration to the seat which Chippendale himself recommended.

Fig. 29 is a riband-back chair described as of the first half of the eighteenth century, which has been lent to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Colonel Lyons, and is probably one of the finest examples of this phase of Chippendale's style. The covering to the chair is Italian velvet of the seventeenth century.

This chair probably belongs to a period slightly before the "Director," as the legs have the stalwart look of the Dutch influence rather than the lighter look of Chippendale's later French style. Probably if one were an expert and wished to place the chair with approximate accuracy it

would be true to say that it belongs to the period when the Dutch influence was being dropped and the French assumed, as, although the legs have the Dutch feeling, the riband-back is "founded on the French." The detail of this chair is worth closer study in the museum. It will be noticed that the acanthus-leaf decoration is largely utilised; the claw of the foot is full of spirit and there is no mistake about its clutching the ball; the rope pattern on the front is simple and pleasing; whilst the riband-back with its convolutions, rosettes, and tassel is full of ingenuity and charm. A reference to Fig. 2 will show that the cresting of the chair follows very nearly the lines of those in Chippendale's own book. Fig. 30 is a riband-back single chair of simpler form, although entitled to the character of a fine chair.

Fig. 31 shows three remarkable Gothic chairs. Their Gothic character is more distinct than anything in Chippendale's book, and they are undoubtedly interesting as museum examples. As has already been mentioned, however, it is a question whether the Gothic is a suitable form for the modern domestic surroundings for which these chairs were made, the interior make-up of the houses of the eighteenth century being approximately the same as the

present day. A chair is essentially an article of utility: Gothic architecture was essentially decorative, and it was because it did not combine the two that it gave way to the forms of the Renaissance. In early times cabinets and coffers were treated in the Gothic style, even in its most decorative forms, and the result was supremely successful; but, so far as the writer remembers, the Gothic was never before Chippendale's time applied to domestic chairs in England. Flemish choir-stalls were made in the Gothic manner, and a beautiful example is reproduced in Jacquemart's great work "A History of Furniture"; but such pieces were, of course, of a purely ecclesiastical character. A domestic chair, however, implies an utterly different atmosphere which of itself limits the possibilities of its decoration. There is something incongruous in producing a Gothic window as the back of a domestic chair and making it an article of traffic in the daily domestic life. "There is certainly one true fixed principle," writes Jacquemart, "which is, that furniture should be in harmony with the objects which surround it." Walpole carried the Gothic phase to excess at his house in Twickenham, from which arose the well-known phrase "Strawberry Hill Gothic." His description of his house is entertaining. "Imagine the

walls," he says, "covered with (I call it paper, but it is really paper painted in perspective to represent) Gothic fretwork; the lightest Gothic balustrade to the staircase, adorned with antelopes (our supporters) bearing shields; lean windows fattened with rich saints in painted glass, and a vestibule open with three arches on the landing-place, and niches full of trophies of old coats of mail, Indian shields made of rhinoceros's hides, broad-swords, quivers, long-bows, arrows and spears—all 'supposed' to be taken by Sir Terry Robsart in the holy Wars."

There is a sense of breeding about a really fine chair such as is shown in Fig. 32, which is in the lattice or Chinese style of Chippendale. The suggestion of the Oriental is, of course, more fanciful than actual; but whatever the style may have been called, the result is happy.

The modern stuffed chair had its genesis in the Chippendale period; the "winged" chair with carved legs (Fig. 33) shows that our forbears were no less sensible than ourselves to the comforts of an easy-chair.

The fashion of ladies working in coloured wools was carried over from the Queen Anne period. The "Chippendale" ladies were as much addicted to needlework as their husbands to port, and no doubt found in their occupation a solace for

the absence of their lords, who apparently did not favour their ladies with a large amount of their society. There were doubtless many ladies as industrious as Lady Jane Ingoldsby :

> Or else, her tambour-frame before her, with care
> Embroidering a stool, or a back of a chair
> With needlework roses, most cunning and rare,
> Enough to make less-gifted visitors stare.

An example of a chair covered with a wool-worked pattern is shown in Fig. 34. It is the property of Sir Harry Verney, Bart., M.P., of Claydon House, Bucks, where there is a room in the Chinese fashion which good judges consider was designed by Chippendale.

# CHAPTER V; BEDSTEADS, CHESTS OF DRAWERS, AND OTHER LARGE PIECES

THERE is an interesting catalogue preserved in the library of the City of London, under the date 1730, which would be in the reign of the second George, or what we consider as the Early Chippendale period. The catalogue is important inasmuch as it provides unquestionable evidence of the contents of a London house of moderate dimensions of this period. In this catalogue what would appear to be the reserve price is printed, whilst in the outside right of the column the actual sale price is written in ink, which it is satisfactory to note is in nearly all cases well outside the reserve. The house was the property of Henry Tomson, Esq., of the Inner Temple, barrister-at-law, and was described as "his late dwelling-house, Bartlet's Buildings, against the end of Hatton Garden, Holborn." Amongst the articles in the "Best Chamber and Closet" we find:

| | *Printed figures* | *Written figures* |
|---|---|---|
| A bedstead and sacking, with crimson silk damask furniture and counterpane . | £20 0 0 | £25 0 0 |
| A fine Flanders tick feather bed, bolster and pillows . . . . . | 2 10 0 | 3 4 0 |

| | *Printed figures* | *Written figures* |
|---|---|---|
| An India pattern callicoe quilt . . | £0 15 0 | £1 3 0 |
| Four India back walnut-tree chairs with stuff silk damask seats . . . | 2 2 0 | 2 13 0 |
| A fine silk Persia carpet . . . | 5 5 0 | — |
| A walnut-tree writing-table with drawers | 1 1 0 | 1 14 0 |
| A chimney glass with a glass frame and a pair of glass sconces with glass arms . | 1 5 0 | 1 12 0 |
| A stove and brass fender, shovel, tongs, poker and brush . . . . . | 0 15 0 | 1 4 0 |
| A fine worked mahogany frame finished with sprig work . . . . . | 1 1 0 | — |
| Two worked square stools with loose cases | 0 7 6 | 0 15 0 |
| A strong box garnished with brass . . | 2 2 0 | — |

Passing on to the "Fore Parlour," we find the following among other items:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Two pairs of yellow callimanco window curtains, vallens and rods . . | £0 8 0 | £0 17 6 |
| A mahogany oval table . . . . | 1 5 0 | 2 4 0 |
| Six walnut-tree chairs with matted seats | 0 10 0 | 3 1 10 |
| A mahogany corner cupboard . . | 0 8 0 | 1 5 0 |
| A Japan corner cupboard . . . | — | — |
| An India whig box . . . . . | 3 0 0 | — |
| A six-leaf India screen . . . . | 1 0 0 | — |
| A pier-glass in a black and gold frame . | 1 15 0 | 3 0 0 |
| A steel stove with fender, shovel and tongs | 0 15 0 | 0 15 0 |

Among the items under the heading "China," are: A blue and white bowl and cover, five saucers and chocolate cups, and two teapots and stands.

Coming to the dining-room, there were sold:

| | *Printed figures* | *Written figures* |
|---|---|---|
| Three pairs of chintz curtains lined with white callicoe, white vallens and pullyrods . . . . . | £1 11 0 | £2 7 0 |
| Seven walnut-tree chairs with leather seats and elbow ditto . . . . . | 3 0 0 | 6 10 0 |
| A large sconce in a walnut-tree and gold frame with brass arms . . . | 2 10 0 | 3 18 0 |
| A mahogany oval table . . . . | 1 5 0 | 1 15 0 |
| A battle piece in a black and gold frame . | — | — |
| A nobleman half-length, by Rembrant . | — | 0 15 0 |
| A chimney glass in a walnut-tree and gold frame with brass arms . . . | 1 11 6 | 2 0 0 |
| A large Turkey carpet . . . . | 1 10 0 | 3 5 0 |
| And more "Japanned" cabinets and stands. | | |

In the wine vault there was to be found "part of a barrel of anchovis," six bottles of "old hoc," five flasks of "French claret" and two dozen cider: and a half-chest of "Chiantry Florence bright and of a good flavour."

On an analysis of the above details, which have a certain historical value, we find that in what was probably a typical middle-class house of the period of George II. the walnut furniture was still very much in evidence. No doubt, as in every period of transition, there was a good deal of overlapping because no reasonable householder was going to put his good walnut furniture into the street simply because another wood had come

into fashion. It is to be remarked that the "Japanned" pieces are present in numbers, whilst the "India" patterns and the blue and white china also contribute to the Eastern effects which were so popular at this time. Mahogany furniture is represented by several small pieces, acquired, no doubt, to follow the new mode.

Turkey and Persian carpets were then, as now, the favourite covering for the floors, and many details have a surprisingly modern flavour. It will be noticed that no reserve was placed upon "A nobleman half-length, by Rembrant," which only made fifteen shillings.

The sense of solid comfort which was introduced into our furniture by William and Mary, and for which we have no doubt in the first place to thank the Dutch, was continued through the Queen Anne period to that of Chippendale. Solid the furniture certainly was in the seventeenth century, but comfortable it certainly was not. The easy-chair was unknown, and the oak panelled arm-chairs, interesting and supremely decorative as they were, would certainly not be the resting-places into which a tired man would sink with a sigh of relief.

The standard of comfort in Chippendale's time, as is clearly indicated in the long list of articles which Chippendale enumerates as

being produced by his firm, continued to increase. When the "standard of comfort" in the eighteenth century is mentioned, however, the term is, of course, intended to apply to the well-to-do classes for whom, no doubt, mahogany furniture was, in the great bulk, made. The standard of comfort of the poor had not yet approached that minimum at which it is possible to bring such a term into use. Hogarth's pictures alone provide abundant evidence of the miserable condition of the poor classes, whose furniture probably consisted of a few sticks; and we should also probably find that the comforts of the eighteenth-century lower middle class were approximately those of our poor. The general position is summed up by Thorold Rogers in his book "Six Centuries of Work and Wages." "From one point of view," he says, "the analyst of the 'good old times' may be able to show that life was shorter, disease more rife, the market of food more unsteady, the conveniences and comforts of life fewer and more precarious than they are now. From another point of view, and that by far the most accurate and exact, the relative position of the workman was one of far more hope and far more plenty in the days of the Plantaganets than it has been in those of the House of Hanover."

That there must, in the eighteenth century,

have been a considerable class of people who purchased good furniture is obvious from the large number of pieces which have survived; and there is, moreover, no doubt that the average standard of production was far higher than at the present day when rooms are furnished at a fixed price per suite; and furniture is made by machinery—chair legs, for example, being, like pork sausages, produced from ingenious machines.

Bedrooms, and, in fact, all the living-rooms of this period, were now papered in cheerful Eastern designs which had replaced the tapestries and wainscoting of the previous century, although panelling never went entirely out of use. The following advertisement from the *London Evening Post*, of January 8, 1754, shows the trend of the fashion:

By the King's Patent

The new invented paper-hangings for ornamenting of rooms, Screens, &c., are to be had, by the Patentee's direction, of Thomas Vincent, Stationer, next door to the Wax-work in Fleet Street.

*Note.*—These new invented paper hangings in Beauty, Neatness and Cheapness infinitely surpass anything of the like nature hitherto made use of; being not distinguishable from rich India paper, and the same being beautifully coloured in pencil work and gilt.

Any person who imitates the said paper contrary to his Majesty's said Patent, granted for 14 years from 22nd August 1753, will be prosecuted.

This shows, of course, that the use of "rich India paper," which for some time had been the fashion of the wealthy, was, because of increased demand, imitated and supplied to the less well-to-do.

The usual eighteenth-century bedsteads of the Chippendale period were, no doubt, of a much simpler description than anything in Chippendale's own book. Those wondrous creations were probably intended to attract the millionaire customer of that day, for whom the ordinary simple forms made by Chippendale were not sufficient. Many of the bedsteads in Chippendale's book are beyond the dreams of avarice, and I do not know that any one of them has been identified as having found an actual customer, or even to have passed the stage of design to that of construction. In his book Chippendale writes of one of his most flamboyant designs almost with a touch of humour: "The Crane, at the top of the Canopy, is the emblem of care and watchfulness, which, I think, is not unbecoming a place of rest." The following advertisement which I find in the *Morning Post* for January 12, 1754 (the year Chippendale published the first edition of his book), is interesting as indicating the bedsteads in ordinary use, and also that the hangings are alluded to as "printed cotton

furniture," which appears to indicate that the coverings at that time were considered of as much importance as the pieces themselves:

To be Sold by Auction

The genuine household furniture, Linen, China, Pictures, &c., of a gentleman giving up housekeeping, within 2 doors of Barnes Church in Surrey, consisting of exceedingly neat Mahogany Bedsteads with fluted posts, and printed cotton furniture, a Sedan chair, some fine leaden statues, Vases, Flower pots, Iron Gates, a Harpsichord and a musical Clock.

Auctions were indeed festivities of the highest popularity, even Chippendale having held one (as has already been remarked) when his partner retired. Everything, in fact, was put up for auction. Even the Lord Mayor of London sold offices under the Corporation to the highest bidder, and that of "Coal Meter" at one time fetched the high figure of £6000: and the newspapers of the day contain numbers of advertisements of various kinds of auctions.

We traced in the first volume the evolution of the bedstead from early Saxon times, when the sleeping-places were built into the wall one above the other in the manner of berths aboard ship, and in a fashion which to-day is followed in Holland and Brittany. Following this came the truckle bed and later the heavy oak erections of the sixteenth and seventeenth

centuries. With the advent of mahogany in the early eighteenth century the bedstead assumed a lighter and less funereal appearance, and became, in fact, more of a bed and less of a bier.

To a person furnishing a bedroom with old pieces in the Chippendale style, the bed, no doubt, presents certain difficulties. The comfort of the four-poster is undeniable, and it offers a perfect immunity from draughts. This style of bedstead, however, necessitates a large quantity of hangings, and is often judged unhygienic on this account. On the other hand, a glance at Fig. 35 will show how admirably suited to a Chippendale room is a four-poster bed. The room here introduced is one in the Manor House, Hitchin, Herts, and is reproduced by the courtesy of the owner, Mr. F. W. Phillips. It can hardly be submitted, however, that the problem is insurmountable, as providing one is prepared to face a somewhat increased laundry bill, the demands of hygiene can be adequately met. Certainly the designs of the tester, hangings, and overlay (as reference to the Frontispiece of this volume will show) introduce a note of colour into a room where it is very welcome, and thereby add to the gaiety of the household. Of course the alternative lies in the purchase of a modern Chippendale bedstead, which reproduces at the foot and the

head the forms of decoration which we find on the chairs of the period, and which certainly preserve the spirit of the style: and by those who, for various reasons, do not care for the four-poster, may be adopted without hesitation.

Mr. Phillips's room in Fig. 35 is worth study, as he has succeeded in reproducing an effect in which charm and comfort are very happily combined. The posts of the bed in this room, with their latticed bases, suggest the Chinese Chippendale period. In Fig. 36 the posts are quite fine examples: the columns are reeded and fluted, and are delicately carved with acanthus leaves, and lower is introduced carved knees and claw-and-ball feet. Simple specimens of these bedsteads are to be purchased at unextravagant prices.

Wardrobes, dressing-chests, and commodious pieces generally, for the purpose of holding the constantly increasing articles of clothing were now made in great numbers by an army of cabinet-makers, of whom Chippendale was probably the chief inspiration. A dressing-chest is shown in Fig. 37, with a lattice of Chinese decoration, and the style of these chests also took the forms of a "bow" and "serpentine" front, both of which have the effect of pleasingly breaking up the straight lines. An example of the "serpentine" front is shown in Fig. 38.

The tallboy, which first appeared at the end of the seventeenth century, continued to be made throughout the eighteenth century, until the perhaps less picturesque but probably more convenient hanging wardrobe, with its sliding shelves and drawers under, superseded it. Numbers of tallboys were, however, made during the eighteenth century, which in addition to being of mahogany instead of walnut, were also decorated in some simple fashion, such as latticed corners or "pear-drop" cornices as in Fig. 39.

The bureau bookcase which has been noticed in the Queen Anne period continued to be made during the eighteenth century, and an example is shown in Fig. 40. This type has of late somewhat gone out of use as, in addition to being heavy to the eye, it has the drawback, attaching indeed to all bureau desks, that once the flap is dropped the drawers under are difficult of access.

The large pieces of the earlier period—bookcases, wardrobes, &c.—were frequently (as in the Queen Anne period) surmounted by classical details, notably the broken pediment; but the later pieces were simpler in character, often depending (as the wardrobe in Fig. 41) upon the fine grain of the wood for their decoration. The sideboard, as in the seventeenth century, continued to be used as a serving-table.

An example of the fine Chippendale bookcase is reproduced in Fig. 42. This beautiful piece of furniture is the property of the Norwich Union Life Insurance Society, and stands in the general manager's room at the head office at Norwich. It formed part of the assets of the Amicable Assurance Society, the first life insurance company (founded in 1708), which in 1866 was taken over by the Norwich Union. The rosettes on the lower panels should be noted, and also the Gothic design in the cornice, whilst the tracery over the glass is singularly rich and pleasing, reminding one of the decoration in some fine early types of Chippendale chairs.

The damasks, chintzes, and calicoes of this period no doubt added colour to the rooms of which the backbone was the mahogany furniture. The husband of the day regarded his wife very little as a companion, and in the *petit-poin* needlework which has survived on the furniture we have interesting evidences of his neglect and his wife's ingenuity. Miss Simon, whose study of this period I have already referred to, writes that "the pattern was generally a chequer design and was worked in many coloured wools and silks on a canvas ground. The materials were so strong and durable that the

work is often found in a perfect state of preservation at the present day. In the opinion of well-known experts, these covers, as well as certain kinds of silk damask, and thick velvet, are the only examples of upholstery which have been able to withstand the wear and tear of time. Horsehair or leather covers, and cane seats, being very perishable, are probably never 'original.'"

# CHAPTER VI: MIRRORS, CLOCK-CASES AND THE SMALLER FURNITURE

Mirrors, it is well known, lighten a dark room, and make a light room lighter; they add a sense of space to a small apartment, and extend the horizon of a large one. Generally, the mirrors of the Chippendale period may be divided into two classes, the elaborate gilt mirrors which were designed for the great houses, and would have their place over a Console table or between long windows; and the simple mahogany mirrors of unpretentious appearance, the genesis of which depends mainly on tradition. The eighteenth century was a period of ceremonious entertainment, and important rooms were set aside for this purpose. "The large houses of the time of the first two Georges," writes Mr. Gotch in "The Growth of the English Home," "are magnificent to look at, but uncomfortable to live in. Everything is sacrificed to the state apartments. Most of them are noble rooms admirably adapted for stately functions; but the ordinary living-rooms are mean in comparison, and are not contrived whether as to

aspect, position, or to their relation one to the other, in order to make for cheerfulness or comfort." The less important people were more sensible and contented themselves with more comfort and less display. Chippendale would naturally trim his sails to suit his wealthy customers, and he and his workmen apparently lavished great pains and much invention on the gilded mirrors from which were reflected the soft light of the candles, and the beautiful costumes of the beaux and their ladies. A reference to Fig. 8 shows the designs, from his own book, for two of these mirrors which Chippendale called "Glass Frames." Two other mirrors of this class, the property of Mr. C. J. Charles, of 27 Brook Street, W., are shown in Figs. 43 and 44, in which the carving is very fine. Such mirrors are, of course, very valuable, and even in the period in which they were made their prices were high. There is a reproduction in Mr. Percy Macquoid's "The Age of Mahogany," of a bill of Chippendale's (the firm was then Chippendale and Haig), dated 1773, of furniture made for the Earl of Harewood, which includes "a very large pier-glass, £290."

Reproductions of the simple mahogany mirrors which are known generically as Chippendale, are manufactured in large numbers at the present time. Genuine examples, two of which are

reproduced in Figs. 45 and 46, are, however, to be acquired by the persevering. They were made in plain wood with a simple though varied fret border—continuing very much on the lines of the Queen Anne walnut mirrors. Frequently, as in Fig. 45, they are surmounted by a bird in gilt relief appearing through a hole—a bird unknown to ornithologists. Mr. Heaton points out that nowhere in the furniture books of the time do we find a drawing of these little mirrors, with this curious gilt bird appearing through the hole in the top, "an ornamental object of interest to be found in half the well-furnished houses of the land, and undoubtedly an heirloom from Chippendale's time." There is little doubt that the reason for the omission was that the mirrors belonged originally to the period immediately following Queen Anne, some years before Chippendale's book was published, and afterwards although they continued to be made in considerable numbers they were too commonplace to appeal to Chippendale's wealthy *clientèle*, and were therefore omitted from the book. These little mirrors are, however, exceedingly interesting and decorative, and are to be acquired at unextravagant prices. The line of gilt embroidery round the glass is an interesting detail.

Fig. 47, the property of Mr. Edgar Seligman, is

a toilet mirror of the period; the dentil moulding to the cross-bar and the shaped feet are simple and pleasing features.

Examples of Chippendale's own styles of clock-cases may be seen in Fig. 9, and they certainly bear a fair resemblance to what have descended to us under the title of Chippendale. The condition of these cases is often perfect, due no doubt to the fact that a clock-case is out of the stream of ordinary domestic traffic, and escapes the slings and arrows of fortune which, for example, a chair has to withstand. Mr. F. J. Britten, in his standard book, "Old Clocks and Watches and their Makers," publishes a long list of eighteenth-century clock-makers, and owners of clocks may be recommended to consult this list with a view to arriving at an approximate date from the clock-maker's name they find on the dial. Good clock-cases are rarer than good clocks; and therefore it is not altogether uncommon to find an old clock in a new case: and in buying from a dealer, the fact should be clearly stated on the invoice that the article purchased is an eighteenth-century clock and clock-case. "The characteristics of the cases now usually known as 'Chippendale,'" Mr. Britten writes, "are the pillars and pilasters rising at the front corners of the case, from the plinth to

the entablature under the hood, and the corresponding pillars at the front corners of the hood. Generally the bases and caps are of metal, and the bases fluted." An example of this type is shown in Fig. 48. The clock-cases of this period—nor indeed in any other period in English furniture—do not seem to have been carved.

The wig was, of course, the crown and centre-point of fashion, and possessed its own special piece of furniture in the Powdering Stand (Fig. 49). The gallant arrives to call upon the lady, and before making his appearance in her boudoir, he is shown into a little ante-room or powdering closet in order that he may put the finishing-touches to his wig at the stand provided for that purpose. From the puff-box he takes the powder: from the lower tier the ewer of rose-water, and pours a little water into the bowl on the top tier. Having repowdered his wig he dips his fingers into the rose-water, and is soon ready to be presented to his lady. The example shown in the illustration is the property of Mr. F. W. Phillips, The Manor House, Hitchin, and is valued at seven pounds.

Even the fashion of wearing wigs had its ebbs and flows. Thus we find in 1765 Walpole writing that the periwig-makers had petitioned the King complaining that men will wear their

own hair. No doubt His Majesty received the petition with his usual gracious indifference. Walpole adds with characteristic sagacity: "Should one almost wonder if carpenters were to remonstrate that since the peace their trade decays and that there is no demand for wooden legs." If it be desired to see Chippendale's own designs for Powdering Stands, or, as he calls them, "Bason Stands," they will be found in Figs. 5 and 6. These pieces are sometimes called "Wig Stands," which is a somewhat misleading description, as wigs were not stood upon them, as this was the office of a "Wig Block."

When the gallant reached the boudoir or parlour, he might have found amongst other furniture a pair of stools and a pole-screen with its sliding panel of fine *petit-point* needlework, which was used for shading the lady's face from the fire. The beautiful examples shown in Fig. 50 are at present to be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum, to the woodwork collection of which they are lent by the owner, Colonel Lyons. The claw-and-ball feet and cabriole legs with the escallop-shell decoration suggest the early period of Chippendale strongly reminiscent of Queen Anne. In Fig. 51 is shown a stool of the Chippendale period: this is a type which is generally considered to bear the influence of

another firm of designers, viz., Ince and Mayhew.

Hogarth's pictures are a running commentary on the manners and costumes of the times in which they were painted, viz., the first half of the eighteenth century. On the whole the dress of the men was simpler than in the preceding period, and even the wigs were reduced in size from the enormous top-hampers of the time of William and Mary. The gallant's dress was, however, very splendid, coats of velvet trimmed with gold and silver lace, and waistcoats of brocade and blue satin being included in the wardrobe. It is said that a joint of the toe was sometimes removed to improve the set of the shoe. Men, as in the reign of William and Mary, continued to carry muffs. The gallant of the time is referred to by Bickersteth in 1768 in terms which are decidedly uncomplimentary:

> A coxcomb, a fop, a dainty milk-sop;
> Who, essenc'd and dizen'd from bottom to top,
> Looks just like a doll for a milliner's shop.
> A thing full of prate and pride and conceit;
> All fashion, no weight;
> Who shrugs and takes snuff, and carries a muff;
> A minnikin, finicking, French powder-puff.

The fashion of woman's dress, as now, changed constantly; but all through the century they

appear to have been faithful to the hoop. The effect of this fashion is seen in the arms of the settees and chairs, which are often carried back from the front rail, and in the generous proportions of the seats. The hooped petticoat makes a triumphal appearance in the pictures of the time; in the literature it receives a well-deserved castigation. Addison, with gentle irony, relates in the *Spectator* an incident which purports to take place at a little church in the country:

> As we were in the midst of service, a lady, who is the chief woman of the place, and had passed the winter in London with her husband, entered the congregation in a little head-dress and a hooped petticoat. The people, who were wonderfully startled at such a sight, all of them rose up. Some stared at the prodigious bottom and some at the little top of this strange dress. In the meantime the lady of the manor filled the area of the church and walked up to the pew with an unspeakable satisfaction, amid the whispers, conjectures and astonishments of the whole congregation.

In spite of the spaciousness of the chairs and settees which were constructed with an eye to these enormities, they could not have been adequate except on the assumption that the hoops were fitted with a folding mechanism which rendered them collapsible and enabled the ladies to sit with some approach to comfort.

Sir Walter Besant enumerates some of the

fashions of the day. The ladies, he says, "wore hoods, small caps, enormous hats, tiny 'milkmaid' straw hats; hair in curls and flat to the head 'pompons' or huge structures two or three feet high, with all kinds of decorations, ribbons, bird's nests, ships, carriages and waggons in gold and silver in the erection." Mr. Woolliscroft Rhead, in his interesting little book on "Costume," has analysed the composition of these head-dresses. "The bodies of these enormous erections," he writes, "were formed of tow, over which the hair was drawn in great curls, rolls, bobs, &c., with false hair added, the whole freely plastered with powder, pomatum, &c., decorated with huge bows, ribbons, feathers and flowers." A lady decorated in this fashion would be obviously unable to move about a low-ceilinged room without stooping, so possibly, on the principle that it is an ill wind that blows nobody good, this fashion of headgear may have been a contributory influence in the minds of the architects in designing rooms with high ceilings which were an admirable feature of the time. No doubt these fashions appear as absurd to us as some of our fashions would to the ladies of the eighteenth century.

The minor domestic furniture of the Chippendale period was varied and adequate, and was designed at once to provide conveniences for the

creature comforts, and to please the most fastidious taste. The shaving-table of Chippendale's own design shown in Fig. 5 would be considered luxurious even at the present day, when for many men a diminutive glass on a bathroom wall is considered sufficient. The dumb-waiter (Fig. 52) made its appearance at this time, and was probably introduced to modify, in some degree, the servant difficulty, which then as now was a disturbing phase of domestic life. Fig. 53 is a wine-cooler and stand with brass bands and handles and claw feet, which was made to stand beneath the sideboard. The above are fine specimens, but simple types are procurable at prices within reach of other than the rich; and it is satisfactory to bear in mind that the carving which embellishes the expensive examples, and provides a reason or at least an excuse for their cost, does not in many instances, according to the canons of some tastes, always improve their appearance: the lines of Chippendale furniture are, in fact, so good that decoration is not infrequently at least a mixed advantage.

# CHAPTER VII: SETTEES AND TABLES

MAHOGANY, although long since adopted by the English as a favourite child, is alien to the English soil. It is a native of tropical places—Central America, Mexico, and the West Indian Islands. It is said that the wood found on the islands of St. Domingo and Cuba (known as Spanish mahogany) is of finer quality than that found on the mainland, which is known as bay-wood. Mahogany is also found in West Africa. It is supposed to have been "discovered" by a carpenter on board one of Sir Walter Raleigh's ships which in 1597 put into Trinidad for repairs. It appears, however, not to have been introduced into England until the end of the seventeenth century, when a sea captain brought a quantity of the wood over in his ship, and the brother of the captain wished to use it in the building of his new house. The hardness of the wood, however, was such that the workmen declined to use it. Some portion of the consignment came into the hands of a cabinet-maker called Wollaston, who used a portion of it to make a candle-box. The box was

greatly admired, and afterwards bureaux were made by Wollaston in the new wood, which gradually made its way into favour. No doubt it was at once appreciated by cabinet-makers, being little liable to shrinkage or warpage, and also for the reason that it took very kindly to the glue. The wood, however, which the eighteenth-century cabinet-makers had at their disposal was the growth of primeval forests, the trees of which had been allowed, without molestation, to mature. With the enormous present-day trade in mahogany it is, of course, obvious that the conditions of cultivation are changed, and a cabinet-maker, even had he the skill, could not produce the same results. It is interesting to note in passing that mahogany does not appear to have passed into use for ecclesiastical furniture. Mr. Pollen writes that "The Stalls of the Cathedral Church at St. Bavon at Ghent are of mahogany, the only instance known to the writer of such use of it."

Mahogany came slowly into fashion. Most houses were, of course, filled with walnut-wood of the preceding period, and judging from the inventories of the time it at least made a struggle for its position. A man may paper his rooms every year, but he does not refurnish his house except under great provocation, and, therefore, unless a

household were greatly in the fashion the process of replacing the Queen Anne walnut furniture would naturally be a very gradual one. So late as March 1781 we find Dr. Johnson referring to mahogany in a way which suggests that it was not even then general in ordinary houses, although, on the other hand, furniture was not a matter about which the Doctor concerned himself very much, at all events it is not made the subject of records by the faithful Boswell. One extract from "The Life" is, however, interesting:

"Mr. Eliot mentioned a curious liquor peculiar to his country, which the Cornish fishermen drink. They call it mahogany; and it is made of two parts gin and one part treacle well beaten together. I begged to have some made; which was done with proper skill by Mr. Eliot. I thought it very good liquor; and said it was a counterpart of what is called Athol porridge in the Highlands of Scotland, which is a mixture of whiskey and honey. Johnson said, 'That must be a better liquor than the Cornish, for both its component parts are better.' He also observed Mahogany must be a modern name, for it is not long since the wood called mahogany was known in this country."

It has already been remarked that Chippendale was supremely successful in his chairs, and his

settees which were almost equally successful followed the same shapes and variations, having the effect of two or three conjoined chairs with detail almost identical with the single varieties. In previous volumes the evolution of the settee has been traced from the old Saxon settle. These, which were used by the thane and his lady, were sometimes called love-seats, and we find this description used again for the settees of the eighteenth century, although it is to be presumed that in order to justify the title the dimensions should be merely suitable to two persons.

The first mahogany settees, like the chairs, followed the Queen Anne style, the cabriole leg and the claw-and-ball foot being much in evidence. For the great houses the coverings were of the most elaborate description, being composed of the most decorative materials—velvets, damasks, and needlework.

Fig. 54 is what is known as the Bury settee, which is the property of Mrs. Edmund McClure, to whose courtesy I am indebted for permission to reproduce same. This is the settee which is supposed to have been made by the father of the great Chippendale for the family of Bury of Kateshill Bewdley in Worcestershire before the Chippendales (father and son) moved into London, the date of which is generally accepted as being

1727. This piece of furniture, therefore, dates back to certainly more than a quarter of a century before Chippendale published the first edition of his book; and belongs to a time before the firm, probably in competing for rich and ultra-fashionable clients, bemused themselves by producing the occasionally extravagant and impracticable designs which we find in the "Director."

The design of the Bury settee is simple without being plain and rich without being ornate; and it is carved with the claw-and-ball feet, which it will be remembered are entirely absent from the "Director." The splats in the back, whilst preserving the old Queen Anne outline, have been highly lightened and elaborated, and are prophetic of the elaborate riband-backs shown in the "Director." Mrs. McClure purchased this beautiful piece of furniture about 1893 from Mrs. Bury's executors. The seat is covered with contemporary cross-stitch work, possibly done by the Bury family of the period. It is unfortunate that there is no documentary evidence in existence connecting this settee with the Chippendales. On the other hand, tradition, especially when it is supported by expert opinion, is not to be set aside lightly. To have traced the Chippendales to Bewdley would have been a step in the right direction. and the Rector of Bewdley kindly

undertook to make for me a general search of the registers (baptisms, marriages, and burials) at the parish church. Unfortunately no trace of the elusive Chippendale resulted.

A settee of simpler form than the above is the property of Mr. L. G. Dillon (Fig. 55). This piece is of later date, the cabriole legs and claw-and-ball feet being superseded by the straight legs of the later periods. This settee has a certain family likeness, as regards the back, with the Bury settee, although in quality it has the appearance of a poorer relation, although one of great respectability. The window-seat (Fig. 56) is an unusual piece of the Chippendale period, and is the property of Mr. C. J. Charles, of 27 Brook Street, W.

Of tables in this period there were—large and small—a great number. There were the tripod tables (with their "tip-up" or "let-down" tops) upon which great care and craftsmanship were expended. The plain-topped ones were used as tea-tables, but those with galleried tops were used generally for the display of small pieces of china or *objets de vertu*, such as snuff-boxes. Fig. 57, which is the property of Mr. C. J. Charles, 27 Brook Street, W., is a beautiful example of a galleried table with claw-and-ball feet and knees decorated with acanthus-leaf design;

a somewhat similar design is shown in Fig. 58, which is to be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This example has a moulded or shell rim, a pattern which was and is very general, and is also applied to silverwork, being a favourite decoration for the edge of trays, when it is known generically as "Chippendale pattern." The form is clearly shown in Fig. 59, which has an unusually large top, so that when it is "tipped" on its pivot a sense of disproportion is conveyed, due, of course, to the fact that the stem of the table is covered by the top. "Galleried" tables were not always made on the "tip-up" principle, as will be seen from the exquisite example shown in Fig. 60, which is the property of Mr. C. J. Charles. Fine specimens of small Chippendale show tables are rare and very expensive, and even plain ones reach considerable prices. It is of course obvious that tables of this description were not made for other than the well-to-do classes, who at the time paid good prices for them and carefully preserved them in their drawing-rooms.

Card-tables were made during the Chippendale period in large quantities, as gambling at this time may almost be said to have been established and endowed; everybody gambled, from the members of the Cabinet to the poorest people, who

would take any fraction of a share in some wretched lottery and make almost any sacrifice to this end. Even the State ran a lottery which was not abolished until 1824, an annual loss of a quarter of a million to the Exchequer. Hogarth's pictures are full of stories illustrating the prevailing vice, which at least, so far as the poorer classes were concerned, not infrequently led to the Fleet Prison or Tyburn. In one of his pictures White's Club (which was then a coffee-house) is on fire, but still the play continues and the highwayman calmly sits by the fire waiting for the winners to start away home with their gains. Besant says that sometimes the players would sit with their coats turned inside out in the superstition that the change would bring them luck, and also they would sit with straw hats on their heads nominally to save their eyes from the light, but actually to conceal the anxiety on their faces.

There were many sorts of card-tables, but a favourite type is shown in Fig. 61 with its lattice or Chinese decoration. It will be seen that a little of the lattice-work is missing. The tops, although sometimes showing the polished wood, were often covered with green cloth, and fretted brackets were frequently added to the corner at the juncture of the legs. It is curious that these

tables were very seldom fitted with drawers like the Queen Anne tables.

Large dining-tables of the Chippendale period were on the extending principle, depending for their support upon a forest of legs, but such tables would only have been in use in families with a taste for entertaining. No doubt the more common dining-table was the type shown in Fig. 62, which has the great merit of simplicity, and when out of use the two flaps can be dropped and the table stood against the wall. The wood is frequently of rich complexion, and in weight they are materially heavier than modern tables, and they are to be acquired at this day for unextravagant prices. For a mahogany dining-room they are probably the most useful of tables. The addition of a little carving or fretwork on all pieces of this period adds to their market value out of all proportion, in the writer's opinion, to the value of the decoration. For this reason, modern carving is frequently added to a genuine old table of plain type with the obvious motive of increasing its price. Therefore the decoration should always be made the subject of special attention. The little fretwork corners are often added, which is of course a device for the making of unfair gain, and in this connection Mrs. Clouston (whose book on the furniture of this period is

a valuable contribution to its literature) has pointed out that genuine Chippendale frets were not carved out of one piece of wood but were composed of several thin pieces glued together with the grain running various ways, a principle which was a great source of strength; boxes are made at the present day on the same method of construction, the durability of which is unquestionable.

The little dressing- or writing-table shown in Fig. 63 is of mahogany and strongly reminiscent of the Queen Anne pattern, and probably belongs to the Early Chippendale period. It was the property of Mr. J. H. Springett, of Rochester. Such pieces being in a high degree both useful and decorative, would naturally have been carried over from the former time to that of Chippendale and his contemporary workers, who were always ready to adopt any idea which appealed to their sense of beauty or efficiency. This little table with its nest of useful drawers, shaped underframe, and claw-and-ball feet was sold for seven guineas.

A type of table which was made for the great houses was that known as the console or pier-table. The French *console*, meaning bracket, more or less indicates a table which stands against or leans to the wall. The alternative description describes a table which was intended to stand

beneath a pier-glass, often against a wall between two windows. Its marble top would support with propriety a fine piece of Chinese porcelain. Made not in mahogany but in some soft wood the console tables were heavily gilded, and their form was, no doubt, founded on that of Louis Quinze, plentifully intermixed with Chinese and Gothic designs. Such tables were originally made for a special purpose in highly decorated rooms used for entertainment, and are, of course, hopelessly out of place in ordinary domestic surroundings. A very fine example of this type of table, the property of Mr. C. J. Charles, is shown in Fig. 64.

As regards Chippendale's pedestal writing-tables no doubt a great deal of first-class work was expended upon them. They are amongst the few surviving types which approximate in appearance to the illustrations in Chippendale's book, and remain to this day the settled form of library or office desk, although for the latter purpose they have been partly supplanted by the pretentious and often unsatisfactory American roll-top desk. These pedestal writing-tables, apart from their value as antiques, must have cost originally a good sum to construct, and they are not to be acquired cheaply. Some examples have a curiously new look, having

stood in one place away from the sun and in comfortable surroundings since their first appearance in the house for which they were made. In this connection the following extract from Mr. Percy Macquoid's book "The Age of Walnut" offers interesting evidence: "At Nostell Priory there is a library writing-table, so sharp and new-looking in all detail and colour that without *prima facie* evidence many well-informed enthusiasts might doubt its authenticity, but this particular table was made for the room in which it now stands; it is introduced with the side of the room as a background in a family group painted about that time. Thos. Chippendale's bill, dated 1766, in which the item of the table occurs, has always been preserved in one of the drawers."

Chippendale made in all a great variety of tables which, as regards the requirements of the modern house, it is difficult to suppose will be improved upon, certainly nothing has been produced since to challenge them either in appearance or utility.

It should be perhaps noticed here that Sheffield plate came into fashion at this time and was used very generally for the decoration of the rooms. It was made by rolling under great pressure sheets of silver on to sheets of copper, and the two metals,

being thus conjoined, were afterwards fashioned into their various shapes. This was, of course, very different from the present-day method of depositing a thin film of silver on a metal base by the electro-plating process. In the card-tables places are sometimes found hollowed out at the corners to take the candle-sticks. Horace Walpole in one of his letters (1753) refers to the new fashion as follows: "I passed through Sheffield, which is one of the foulest towns in England. . . . One man there has discovered the art of plating copper with silver; I bought a pair of candlesticks for two guineas, which are quite pretty."

Walpole was a shrewd and lively observer of the period in which he lived; it is to be regretted that, although a collector himself, he says so little about his furniture in his letters. His references to the times for which it was made are, however, to the point. He writes to a friend in 1763:

> The Parliament opens; everybody is bribed; and the new establishment is conceived to be composed of adamant. November passes with two or three self-murders and a new play. Christmas arrives; everybody goes out of town; and a riot happens in one of the theatres. The Parliament meets again; taxes are warmly opposed; and some citizen makes his fortune by a subscription. The opposition languishes; balls and assemblies begin; some master and miss begin to get together; and talked of, and give occasion for forty more matches being invented; an unexpected debate starts up at the end of the

session that makes more noise than anything that was designed to make a noise, and subsides again in a new peerage or two. Ranelagh opens and Vauxhall; one produces scandal, and t'other a drunken quarrel. People separate, some to Tonbridge, and some to all the horse races in England; and so the year comes again to October.

# CHAPTER VIII: IRISH CHIPPENDALE : CONCLUSION

One very distinct style of mahogany furniture is known as Irish Chippendale. The design and general feeling of this phase is heavier than the English, the surface being flatter and the carving being almost invariably in low relief. The effect, however, is interesting, and in many examples seems to suggest something of the national feeling. The wood is generally Domingo mahogany, a wood of the darkest shade of brown, approximating in certain lights almost to black. It is a matter, however, for historical research to determine how far the personality of Chippendale is responsible for this style, or whether it is not really a matter of family influence. There is not the smallest reason for supposing that Chippendale ever carried on a separate business in Ireland. The English who had settled in Ireland in the sixteenth century are historically known as " planters," and must have imported into the country English ideas of furniture and furnishing. In the seventeenth century, during the Cromwellian period, large tracts of land passed from Irish to English ownership. " Traitors' lands," writes Mrs. J. R.

Green, "openly sold in London at £100 for a thousand acres in Ulster or for £600 in Munster, and so on in every province. It was a cheap bargain, the value of forfeited lands being calculated by Parliament later at £2500 for a thousand acres. The more rebels the more forfeitures." These "planters," it is said, amounted to one-fourth of the people of Ireland, and were established as owners of four-fifths of Irish soil.

Mr. Froude, however, takes an entirely different view of the situation. He described the position as "systematic colonisation, long understood by English statesmen to be the only remedy for the chronic disorder, yet delayed in mistaken tenderness."

In any case, however historians may differ as to causes, the effect was that the business of confiscating lands was continued by William, although with less enthusiasm. "London speculators and crown favourites," writes Mr. Froude, "acquired large estates in Ireland"; or they "were distributed, under Letters Patent, to courtiers and favourites with the most lavish and indiscriminate generosity." William's Dutch friends naturally came in for a share. Van Keppel, Lord of Voorst, created Earl of Albermarle by William under a plea of "service done," received a hundred thousand acres; and Lady Orkney, whose "sole

claim to consideration lay in her being the daughter of the Knight Marshal of Charles the Second's household," received the enormous Irish estates of the late King. Such a system, whereby the land passed into the hands of those who at least had no right to it, inevitably increased the system—mischievous and pernicious—of absentee landlordism. "The absenteeism of Ireland," writes Mr. Froude, "was peculiarly objectionable, for the justification of the forfeitures was the necessity of settling English and Scotch rulers on the soil. That land had become a chattel to be bought and sold at pleasure, however, rendered the enforcement of residence impossible. The altered circumstances of Society threw estates into the market or made them the prey of political intrigue; and the successful speculator, when his prize was secured, carried the profits to enjoy them where he pleased."

It may seem a far cry from the troubled condition of Ireland in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century to so peaceful an inquiry as the genesis of Irish Chippendale furniture, yet in order to arrive at a conclusion on this distinct phase of his influence, these references are perhaps instructive. The absentee landlord could not always be absent, in spite of the fact that life in England was brighter, livelier, and more to his

taste than residence in a country in which he was an alien. In many cases, no doubt, he was compelled to have two homes, as however he might let and sublet his estates, some sort of periodical inspection and management was necessary. A rich Englishman having to furnish his house in Ireland would naturally select the now fashionable mahogany furniture to adorn his Irish home. Cabinet-makers, as trade follows the flag, would naturally turn their eyes to the country for which the furniture was intended, and in the course of time set up workshops and establish businesses there, and would, as they became more or less acclimatised, introduce into their work something of the Irish feeling. "The great folks," writes the author of the "English in Ireland," "the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, went and came between Dublin and the London Season; bishops applying for convoys to Holyhead, and 'a sound vessel for my coach and twelve horses'; peers and judges asking to take with them 4000 or 3000 ounces of wrought plate duty free 'for my own use.'"

Some authorities consider that Irish Chippendale furniture was merely ordered from London makers for the purpose of furnishing Irish houses, but it certainly appears more likely that the furniture was made in Ireland and not in England,

as its style is totally different from any known English style, and it is unlikely that the designs were supplied by the buyers. The fact that it is almost invariably made from the dark Domingo mahogany is a remarkable phenomenon for which no adequate explanation is forthcoming.

The several pieces of Irish Chippendale furniture reproduced will sufficiently indicate the style which characterises this phase. The escallop shell decoration was popular during the Queen Anne period, and it is natural that this should continue into a phase which at least had its genesis in England. The fact that many of the backs of the chairs are of oak veneered with mahogany suggests the early part of the eighteenth century as the period of their production, a time when mahogany was a rare wood, and its use sparingly indulged in. Figs. 65–68 are the property of Mr. Burgess Hill, of 55 and 57 Maddox Street, Bond Street, London, W., who makes a speciality of the collection of this style of Chippendale furniture which he invariably discovers in Ireland. Although, no doubt, based on English designs, the Irish Chippendale furniture is, nevertheless, a distinct and interesting phase; and although somewhat difficult to acquire both on account of its rarity and cost, an example should, if possible, find a place in a collection. Fig. 69 is a long-case

clock of undoubted Irish parentage, the property of Dr. Redmond Roche, 1 Eccleston Square, S.W.

* * * * *

In writing a concluding word it must be admitted that the modern eulogy of Chippendale is somewhat overdone: it almost amounts to his canonisation. Mr. Heaton is a severe critic of Chippendale, and really, after all the exaggerations of his talent which other writers have indulged in, Mr. Heaton is bracing reading, particularly when he describes him as "not only not a man of education and modesty, but a very commonplace and vulgar hawker of his wares, prepared to make anything that will please his customers and fill his purse." It is not very valuable criticism, no doubt, as certainly modesty and vulgarity are merely matters of opinion and have nothing to do with the making of furniture, and as regards pleasing his customers and filling his purse, this desire was no doubt shared, amongst many others, by Shakespeare and Rembrandt. Mr. Heaton is on much surer ground when he writes regarding Chippendale's book: "It is greatly to be regretted, however, that instead of giving us plates, nine-tenths of which are show pieces, intended to tempt wealthy people, he did not give us a volume of drawings of

the average daily produce of his workshop." Mr. Heaton is the severest critic of Chippendale, but it is to be confessed that there is the taste of a tonic in his opinions after reading those of some authors in whose writings Chippendale is described as a personage somewhere between Michael Angelo and St. Augustine.

One writer says that "by 1750, Chippendale was recognised by high and low alike as an inimitable genius," and also that "Chippendale enjoyed great popularity amongst men of art and letters." I can find not the slightest evidence to support this statement. It is true that he was elected a member of the Society of Arts, of which many distinguished persons were members, but there were many more undistinguished ones. The Society of Arts was not and is not a club, and membership was a distinction no more important than the possession of the means to pay a subscription of a few guineas: and yet we find the same critic writing that his election was "eloquent testimony of the esteem in which the erstwhile joiner was held by the most cultivated in the land." The Society of Arts at that time was struggling for members, and any person of average respectability would be gladly received. As a matter of fact, Chippendale, in the estimation of his contemporaries, was a cabinet-maker with a

successful business; neither more nor less. It is said that his name never occurs in the inventories of his time, the furniture merely appearing as "mahogany," without the maker's name, which no more than in the Jacobean period was considered important enough to mention. Dr. Johnson, for example, mentions mahogany, but never the name Chippendale: and Horace Walpole, who was the greatest connoisseur and collector of his day, never refers to him. Even Sheraton, who published a book of designs fourteen years after Chippendale's death, refers to the latter's work as "now wholly antiquated and laid aside." The plain truth of the matter is that the complete appreciation of Chippendale furniture is entirely modern: he was a cabinet-maker in his own day: a forgotten quantity during the Victorian era; and only in comparatively recent times has his personality excited interest and his work enthusiasm.

There is probably no piece of genuine Chippendale furniture, however decorative, which has not some definite and adequate use; the office of utility came first, and the scheme of decoration was secondary. The debt that the modern household owes to Chippendale is a real and permanent one: his inventive faculty contributes to our comfort, and his sense of form and fitness to our æsthetic enjoyment. In return the simple

products of his school, originally the furniture of our farm-houses or modest city dwellings, are now afforded places of honour in the drawing-rooms of the well-to-do; and the finer pieces are the treasured possessions of museums and millionaires.

Chippendale furniture is essentially domestic, and the pieces intended for more or less state occasions—settees, for example—are made to sit on, and not merely to gaze at: even the backs of the elaborate chairs are not by any means as fragile as they may appear, but, as is proved by the fact that so many survive in almost perfect condition, are quite able to hold their own in the struggle for existence. The furniture of the Chippendale school is the most adequate that has yet been evolved for use in the modern house. With the triumphant exception of the bathroom, which in Chippendale's day was regarded as neither a luxury nor a necessity, there has been no material change in the interior make-up of the house from that day to this: and, so far as furniture is concerned, there has been practically nothing added on the score of convenience to the productions of the Chippendale school.

He would be a rash prophet who would assert that we have now reached a point at which nothing more remains to be done in the direction of household furnishing; that in this respect art

and invention have no interest or inspiration; and that we must either perpetuate the old forms or decadence must set in. Certainly it would appear that all modern style is either a revival of the old in the direction of replica, or an unhappy hotch-potch of several, producing a Jacobean-Queen Anne-Chippendale effect, which is cross-bred and unhappy. We can no longer fall back upon the influence of the Renaissance for virility, or upon Dutch (which has had probably a greater influence upon our furniture than any other) for ideas of comfort and convenience; or even upon the French, to which in past times we were indebted for lightness and grace. Persons of taste are now purchasing old furniture, of which, obviously, there is not nearly enough to go round; taste happily is spreading, but in spite of clever imitations the supply of old furniture remains the same—it merely changes hands.

People with large estates and superb views naturally feel little enthusiasm for garden cities; and others with fine collections of antique furniture can afford to look contemptuously upon modern machine-made productions. It is, however, useless to decry the one or the other, as the one provides decent houses for decent people, and the other provides the only practicable means of supplying furniture for a large population.

Of course there is a limit to all things, and every one cannot collect old furniture. It is, nevertheless, in the last degree unlikely that furniture or any other product of craftsmanship will ever be produced by machinery with the same degree of spirit and individuality as the work of the man at the bench. Those, therefore, with the means or opportunities, or those with the taste and spirit of discovery, who are able to collect in their houses examples of the old-time work, may rejoice in the possession of objects of abiding interest and pleasure, and even on the lower ground of commercial speculation may consider they have done well for themselves, or at least for their descendants.

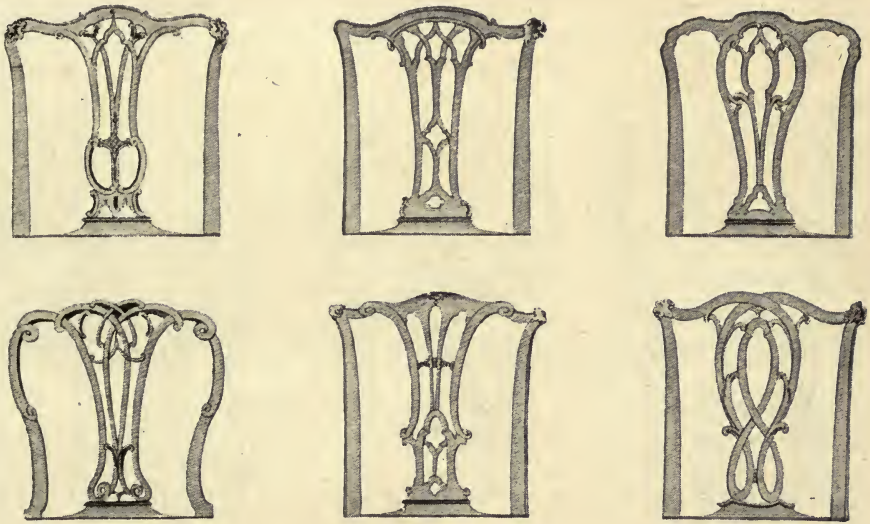

FIG. 1. BACKS OF CHAIRS
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

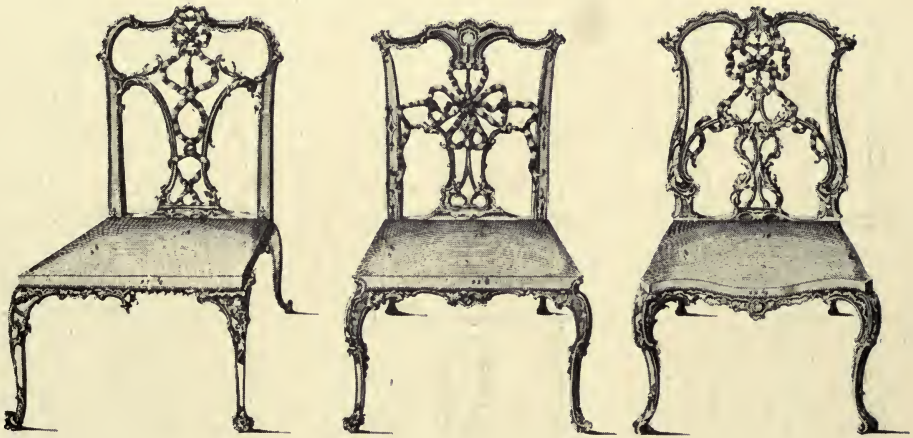

FIG. 2. RIBAND-BACK CHAIRS
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

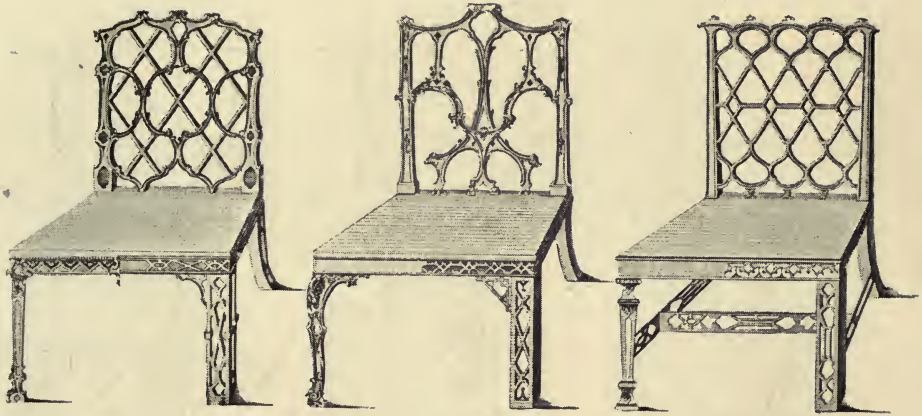

FIG. 3. GOTHIC CHAIRS
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

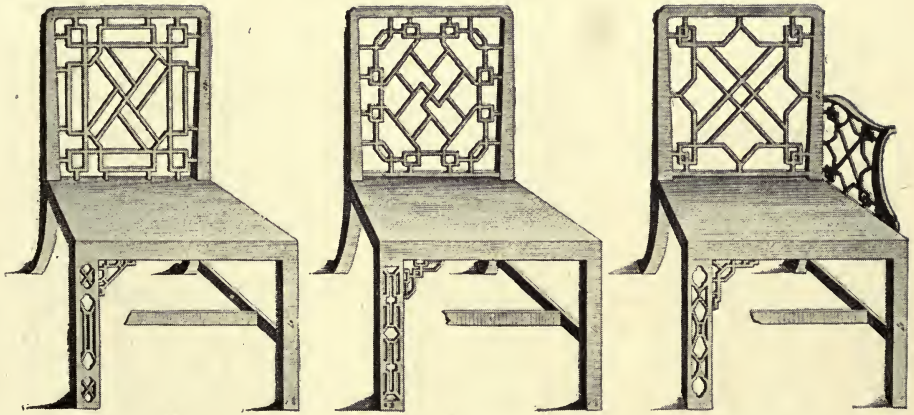

FIG. 4. CHINESE CHAIRS
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

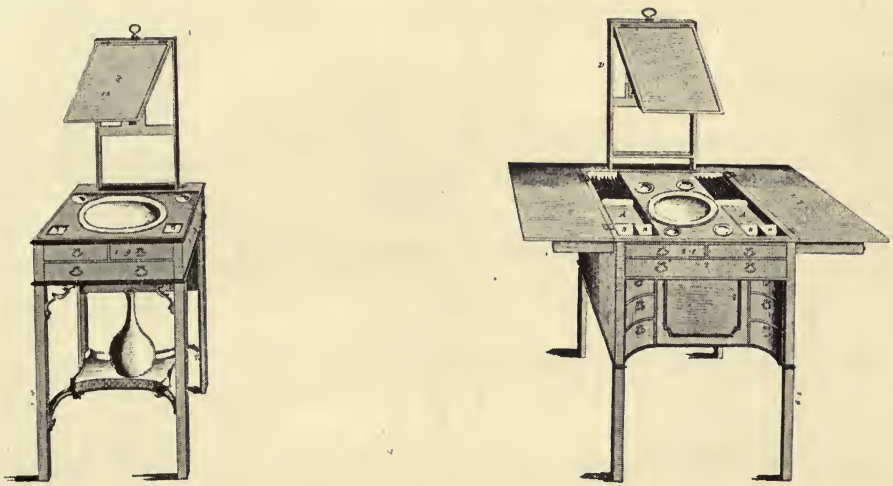

FIG. 5. A BASIN-STAND AND GLASS AND A SHAVING-TABLE
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

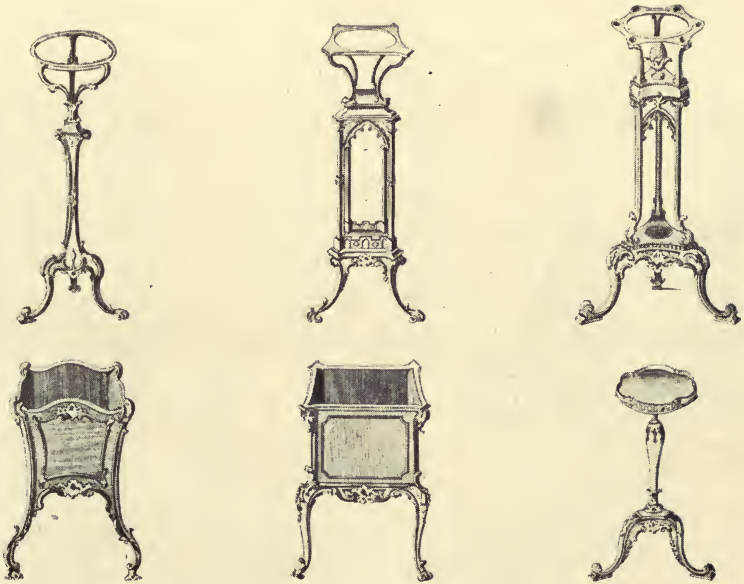

FIG. 6. DESIGNS FOR BASIN-STANDS AND TEA-KETTLE STANDS
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

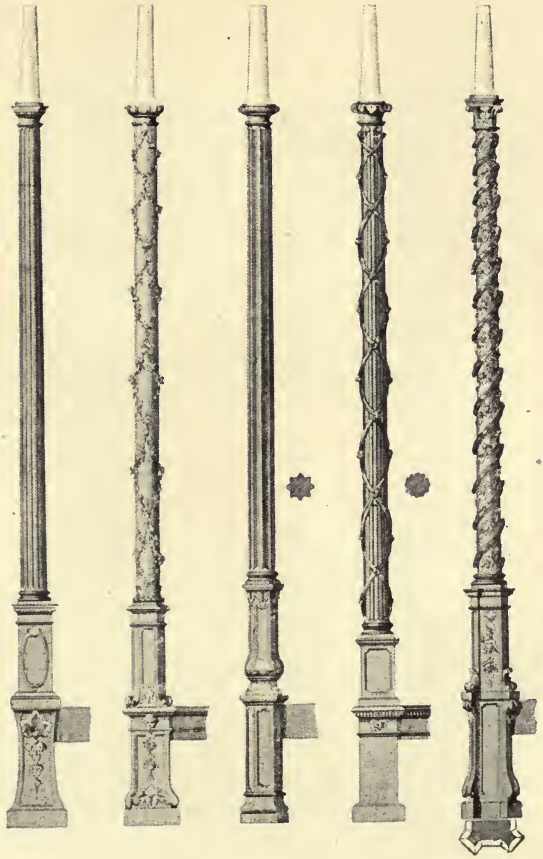

FIG. 7. BED-PILLARS
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

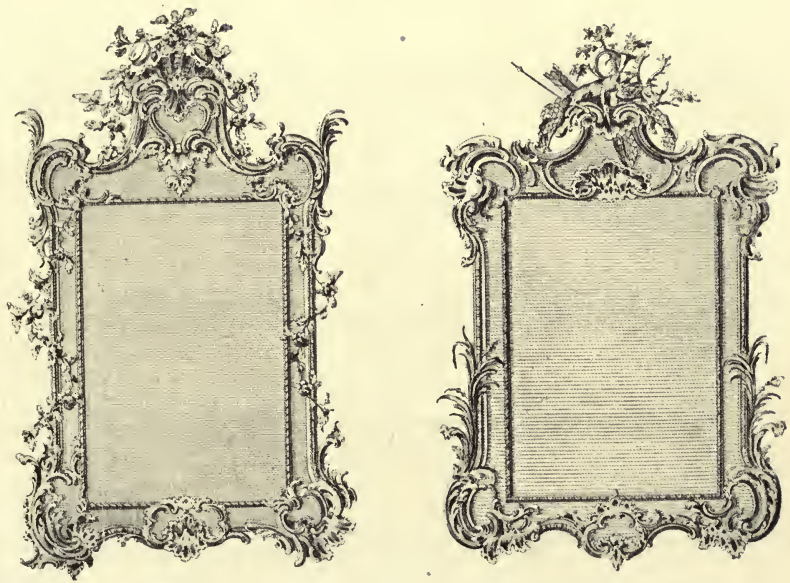

FIG. 8. GLASS FRAMES
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

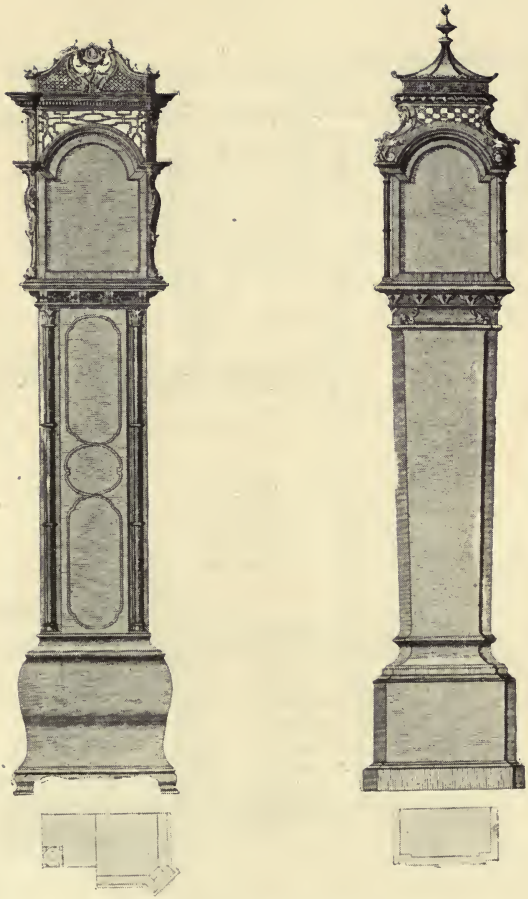

FIG. 9. CLOCK-CASES
(Reproduced from Chippendale's own book)

FIG. 10. SPINDLE-BACK SINGLE CHAIR

FIG. 11. SPINDLE-BACK ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 12. LADDER-BACK ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 13. PIERCED LADDER-BACK ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 14. PIERCED LADDER-BACK SINGLE CHAIR

FIG. 15. PIERCED LADDER-BACK ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 13. WINDSOR ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 17. WHEEL-BACK ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 20. CORNER CHAIR

[FIG. 21. SET OF SIMPLE CHAIRS

FIG. 22. ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 23. SIMPLE RIBAND-BACK ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 24. SIMPLE GOTHIC ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 25. CHINESE ARM-CHAIR

FIG. 26. SINGLE CHINESE CHAIR WITH CARVED LEGS

FIG. 27. FINE EARLY CHIPPENDALE CHAIR
(The property of Edward Duveen, Esq.)

FIG. 28. **FINE CHAIR**
(At St. Peter's Hospital, Bristol)

FIG. 29. FINE RIBAND-BACK ARM-CHAIR
(Lent to the Victoria and Albert Museum by Colonel Lyon)

FIG. 30. FINE RIBAND-BACK SINGLE CHAIR

FIG. 31. FINE GOTHIC CHAIRS

FIG. 32. FINE CHINESE CHAIR

FIG. 33. WINGED CHAIR

FIG. 34. CHAIR COVERED WITH WOOLWORK.
(The property of Sir Harry Verney, Bart., M.P.)

FIG. 35. CHIPPENDALE BEDROOM IN THE MANOR HOUSE, HITCHIN

FIG. 36. BEDSTEAD WITH CLAW-AND-BALL FEET

FIG. 37. DRESSING-CHEST WITH LATTICE DECORATION

FIG. 38. DRESSING-CHEST WITH SERPENTINE FRONT

FIG. 39. TALLBOY

FIG. 40. BUREAU BOOKCASE

FIG. 41. WARDROBE

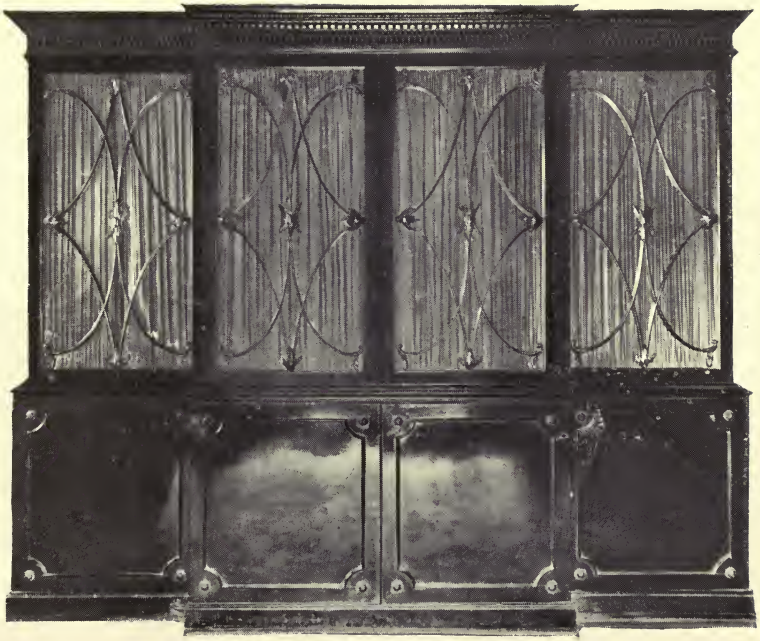

FIG. 42. FINE BOOKCASE
(The property of the Norwich Union Life Insurance Society

FIG. 43. FINE MIRROR

FIG. 44. FINE MIRROR

FIG. 45. SIMPLE MIRROR

FIG. 46. SIMPLE MIRROR

FIG. 47. SIMPLE TOILET MIRROR

FIG. 48. CLOCK-CASE

FIG. 49. POWDERING STAND

FIG. 50. FINE POLE-SCREEN AND PAIR OF STOOLS

FIG. 51. STOOL

FIG. 52. DUMB-WAITER

FIG. 53. WINE-COOLER AND STAND

FIG. 54. THE BURY SETTEE

FIG. 55. SIMPLE SETTEE

FIG. 56. WINDOW-SEAT

FIG. 57. FINE GALLERIED TABLE

FIG. 58. FINE TABLE WITH MOULDED RIM

FIG. 59. TABLE TOP

FIG. 60. FINE LATTICED TABLE

FIG. 61. SIMPLE LATTICED TABLE

FIG. 62. SIMPLE DINING-TABLE

FIG. 63. EARLY CHIPPENDALE DRESSING-TABLE

FIG. 64. CONSOLE TABLE

FIG. 65. IRISH CHIPPENDALE CHAIR

FIG. 66. IRISH CHIPPENDALE TABLE

FIG. 67. IRISH CHIPPENDALE STOOL

FIG. 68. IRISH CHIPPENDALE
CHINA-CABINET

FIG. 69. IRISH CHIPPENDALE CLOCK

# INDEX


ADDISON quoted, 80
Arts, Society of, 1–2, 103
Auctions, popularity of, 67

BASIN stands, 30
Bedposts, 31
Bedrooms, 68–69
Bedsteads
  designs, in Chippendale's book, 18, 66
  Fourposters, 68–69
  in ordinary use, 67
Besant quoted, 49, 52, 80–81, 90
Bickersteth quoted, 79
Bookcases, 70–71
Boswell quoted, 85
Britten, F. J., quoted, 76

CHIPPENDALE, the first, 4–5
Chippendale, Thomas (his career, *see* Chapter I)
  comes to London, 5
  critically considered, 102–105
  definition of, 33
  extravagance of his designs, 19, 22
  has a fire, 5
  has a sale, 6
  his book, 9 (*see also* Chapter II)
  his customers, 12, 18
  his death, 6–7
  his friend, Sir T. Robinson, 10, 11, 12
  his phases, 37, 38
  list of his furniture, 17
  marries, 5
  no portraits of, 14–15
  Simon's opinion of, 8
Chairs (*see* Chapters III and IV), 33–46
Chairs, Chinese, 23, 25, 30, 44, 58
  Corner, 43
  covered with needlework, 59
  coverings of, 34–35
  designs in Chippendale's book, 29–30
  fine, 52–59
  French, 24
  Gothic, 24, 27, 29, 44, 57–58
  in Hogarth's pictures, 41–42
  Ladder-back, 39–40, 41
  phases of decoration, 38–39
  reading, 43
  Riband-back, 23, 29, 44, 55–56
  roundabout, 43
  sets of, 45
  Simple, 28–29, 33
  Spindle-back, 39
  stuffed, 58
  transition from Queen Anne, 35, 37
  Wheel-back, 43
  Windsor, 43
Chest of drawers in Hogarth's picture, 42
  simple, 69
  with serpentine front, 69
Chinese chairs, 23, 25, 30, 44
  influence, 24, 25, 26, 52, 63
Claw-and-ball foot, 21, 35, 53, 69, 87, 88, 92
Clock-cases.
  characteristics of, 76–77
  Chippendale's designs for, 31
  Irish, 102
Clouston, Mrs., quoted, 92
Clouston, R. S., quoted 27
Costume of period, 51, 79–81

DUMB-WAITERS, 82
Dutch influence, 36, 55, 56, 63, 106

FROUDE, J. A., quoted, 98, 99, 100
Furniture
  Dutch influence, 36
  French influence, 22, 93
  in typical 18th century house, 60–63
  ornate, 23, 82
  simple, few prices in "Director," 22

GAMBLING in 18th century, 49, 89–90
Gotch quoted, 73–74
Gothic influence, 27, 29, 57
  chairs, 24, 27, 29, 44
Green, Mrs., J. R., quoted, 97–98

HEATON quoted, 75, 102–103
Hogarth, reference to, 40–42, 51, 64, 79, 90
Homes, of the middle class, 12, 13, 14, 60–64
  of the poor, 12, 13, 64
  of the rich, 73–74
Hoops, women's, 80

INGOLDSBY quoted, 59
Irish Chippendale (*see* Chapter VIII), 97
  " planters," 97–99

JACQUEMART quoted, 57

LADDER-BACK chairs, 39–40, 41
Lion decoration, 38

MACQUOID, Percy, quoted, 74, 94
Mahogany, 83–85, 97
Mirrors
  Chippendale's own designs, 31
  classes of, 73
  Fine, 74
  Simple, 74–75
  Toilet, 75–76

NEEDLEWORK, 58–59, 71–72, 87

OAK furniture, 33

POLE screens, 42, 78
Pollen quoted, 84
Powdering Stands, 77–78

QUEEN ANNE style, 35, 36, 37, 75

RHEAD, WOOLLISCROFT, quoted 81
Riband-back chairs, 23, 29, 44
Rogers, Thorold, quoted, 12, 13, 47, 64

SATYR decoration, 38, 53
Settees
  Bury Settee, 86–88
  history of, 86
  simple, 88
Sheffield plate, 94–95
Sheraton, quoted, 31, 104
Simon, Miss, quoted, 5, 6, 8, 27, 71
Soane Museum, 52–53
Society in 18th century, 46–50
Society of arts, 1–2, 103
Spindle-back chairs, 39
St. Peter's Hospital, Bristol 54
Stools, 78–79
Strawberry Hill, Gothic, 57

TABLES
  Card, 89–90

2.MISO-11-88

NK
2542
C5B5

Blake, John Percy
Chippendale and his school

12